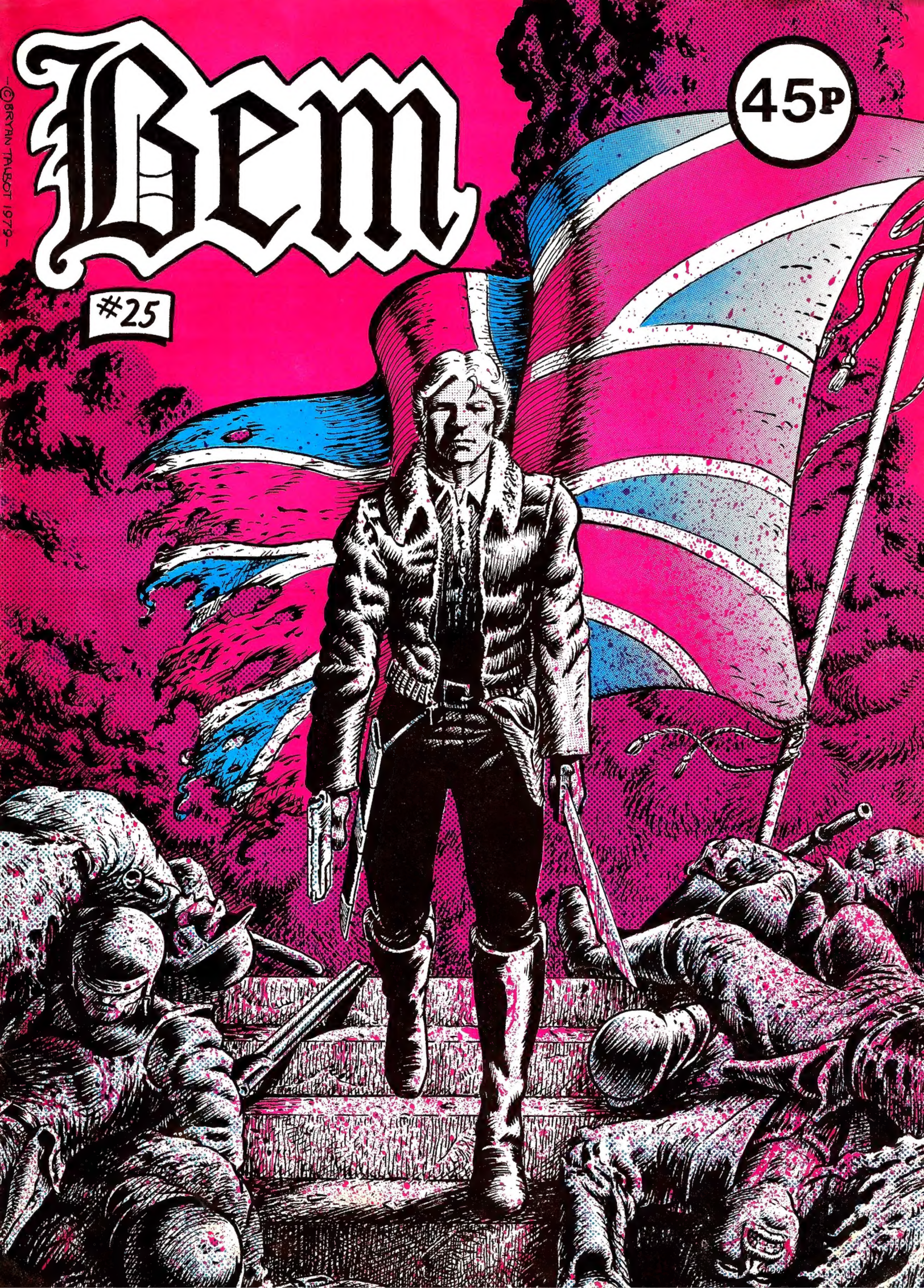
Bem
45p
#25
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editor & publisher: Martin Lock
consulting editor: Mike Cruden

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We still have copies of Bem 12 and Bems 15-24; copies are available for 30p each by post. All eleven back issues, with 264 pages, can be yours for £2.50; or the eleven back issues and a seven-issue subscription is only £5.00.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To subscribe to this magazine, please send your name and address, plus a cheque or postal order for £3.00 (for seven issues) made payable to *Martin Lock*, to M. Lock, 3, Marlow Court, Britannia Square, Worcester, WR1 3DP. Please indicate which issue of Bem you wish to start your subscription with. Subscribers also receive copies of the monthly adzine FANTASY TRADER published at the same time as Bem; to receive the issues of FT published between Bems, contact Gez Kelly, 34 Heworth Hall Drive, York YO3 0AQ.

NEW READERS START HERE . . .

Contributors, including people whose letters are printed in Reaction, are sent a complimentary copy of the issue of Bem their work is in – or if they have a subscription, it is extended by one issue. Please therefore enclose your full address with any letter – if you want a personal reply, remember to enclose return postage. All letters will be considered for publication, including full addresses, unless you indicate otherwise. Comments in Reaction identified in "/( )/" are by Mike Cruden,unless otherwise indicated. Letters, enquiries, contributions, art, magazines for review, ads, etc should be sent to Martin Lock. The number in the bottom left corner of subscribers' envelopes indicates the final issue each subscriber is paid up for.

NEWS AT BEM

Some issues of Bem are easy to put together—and some aren't. I knew there would be problems with the switch to type-setting, which was why it was handy that Bem-25 was to be almost 50% strip material--strips don't have to be type-set. However, the original type-setter decided, just after I'd sent him about half this issue's text, that he was in all probability giving up type-setting, so don't send him any more. With the assistance of my kindly printers, a local firm has been enrolled to do Bem's type-setting from now on, and as I type this they've got around half an issue's worth of type-setting on tape, ready to print--they do also have a break-down, though, which has put them back a week. And all the time, Comicon 79 gets nearer...

However, here we are; I certainly hope that Fan-Things, Katholicity and the tabulation of the Bem readers' votes for the Eagle Awards are on hand, plus news and as much of Reaction as can be fitted in; there is a new instalment of "Made In America", by of course Howard P. Siegel, on hand too, but at the moment it looks more likely to be a highlight of Bem-26, along with a little something that Nige Edwards has promised to write for us. The main features this time, however, are two strips; the longer one, "The Big Hairspray Rumpus", is by Eddie Campbell (script & pencils) and (on inks) Dave Harwood, and introduces a superhero called Cliff, the Moon-Man. Will he return? Only Eddie (who published a fine 40-page comic a few years ago, "A Tale of Beem Gotelump") and Dave (who needs no introduction to Bem readers) know for sure! The 4-page "Planet Tale", which I scripted and Dave drew, has a slightly complicated genesis --good, I knew you'd be interested.

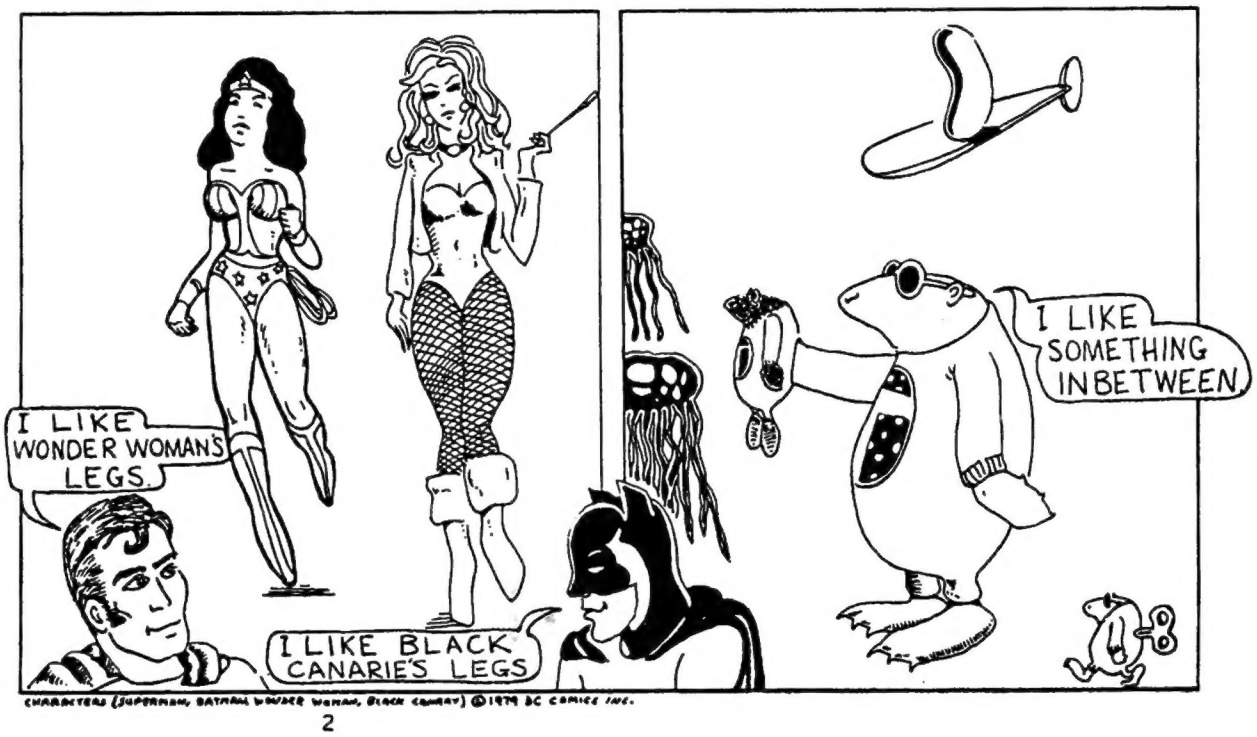
Dave, who is doing some work for IPC these days, asked in a letter if I had any sf scripts spare, as he hadn't any work on hand, and wanted to keep in practise. While I hadn't got anything handy, I quickly wrote "Planet Tale" as a short script of the "Future-Shock" variety; and Dave drew it. When I saw Dave's finished art, I was really captivated by the whole set-up as Dave had drawn it--so right away I grabbed the strip for Bem and, in a typically sneaky way, decided that the best way to make sure of getting some more of Dave's fantastic art was to make the strip into a series. So, Bem-26 will bring part two, "Inside Story", and I hope that the crew of the Conqueror will stay with Bem for the proverbial 5-year mission! Or at least until IPC see just how good Dave is and start to really deluge him with work. And if you think that "Planet Tale" looks pretty splendid, just wait until you see "Inside Story"...

So, there's nice stuff around; thank you for paying the new Bem price of 45p a copy for it. I do realise it's a lot of money, but even with the comparatively low quantity of type-set text this time, I've had an extra £100 to find, which does put 15p on the price. 45p for 28 A4 pages is better value than for example 20p for 24 A5 pages—and the extra legibility of the text now is quite a bonus, I feel.

Due to the production problems, Bem-26 won't be out until November; as usual, letters for Reaction should be sent in as soon as possible, and the Review Section deadline is Friday 12th October. If all goes well, Bem might be able to step up to a true bi-monthly schedule for 1980! But to manage that, we need more readers, and more subscribers...

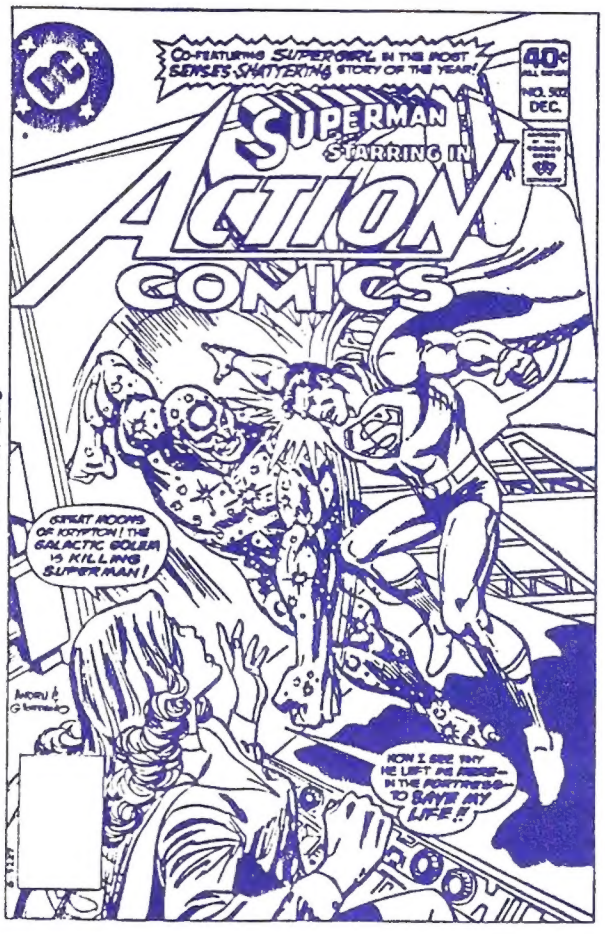
And, next time, I hope that the type-setter will be able to type-set the Editorial page. Isn't modern technology wonderful?

-Martin Lock


I LIKE WONDER WOMAN'S LEGS.
I LIKE BLACK CANARIE'S LEGS
I LIKE SOMETHING INBETWEEN.
CHARACTERS (SUPERMAN, BATMAN, WONDER WOMAN, BLACK CANARY) ©1979 DC COMICS INC.

comics news

Len Wein is DC's newest editor; he takes over JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA (with #177), ADVENTURE (with #467), WONDER WOMAN (with #267), and FLASH (with #284) from Ross Andru, HOUSE OF MYSTERY (with #281) from Jack C. Harris, and WEIRD WAR TALES (with #93) from Paul Levitz. He is also editing a special CHRISTMAS DOLLAR COMIC with, at the moment, the following features scheduled behind a Garcia Lopez cover: Sgt Rock (by Kanigher, Ayers & Tanghal), Batman (by Denny O'Neil, Frank Miller, and the Unknown Inker), Jonah Hex (by Mike Fleisher, Ayers & Tanghal), and Superboy & The Legion (by Levitz, Lopez and an inker)--plus "The Mystery Characters", by Bob Rozakis, Romeo Tanghal, and an inker.


CO-FEATURING SUPERGIRL IN THE MOST SENSES-SHATTERING STORY OF THE YEAR!
40¢
SUPERMAN
STARRING IN
ACTION
COMICS
DEC.
GREAT ROOMS OF KRYPTON! THE GALACTIC GOLEM IS KILLING SUPERMAN!
NOW I SEE WHY HE LEFT ME ALONE— IN THE FORTRESS— TO SAVE MY LIFE!!

Ross Andru will continue to edit JONAH HEX AND OTHER WESTERN TALES (the reprint western digest), WEIRD WESTERN TALES, and JONAH HEX. He will however be devoting more of his time to books and special projects, working with Joe Orlando. Book projects for the next year include a sequel to SUPERMAN: LAST SON OF KRYPTON by Elliot S. Maggin, a Batman novel by Gerry Conway, a superheroes cookbook, and THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COLLECTING COMICS by Paul Levitz. Those will be published by DC's sister company, Warner Books.

Random House is publishing a SUPERMAN POP-UP BOOK by Curt Swan, Bob Oksner and Jerry Serpe, THE SUPERMAN MIX AND MATCH STORYBOOK by Ross Andru and Joe Orlando, a set of four "Little Library" Superman books by E. Nelson Bridwell and Ramona Fradon, and two further projects still being negotiated. Simon and Shuster is publishing AMERICA AT WAR: THE BEST OF DC WAR COMICS (edited by Michael Uslan), HEART THROBS: THE BEST OF DC ROMANCE COMICS, and an as yet untitled SF anthology. The war book includes a complete index to DC's war stories over the past 40 years, and among the stories reprinted are the first Blackhawk adventure from MILITARY COMICS #1, a Boy Commandos tale by Simon & Kirby, and a sequence from the 40's Superman newspaper strip where the Man of Tomorrow takes his Army physical, plus DC's regular battle stars including Enemy Ace and Sergeant Rock.

Because of Len Wein's editorial workload, he leaves SUPERMAN after #344; Gerry Conway takes over, in turn handing on the Green Arrow and Hawkman features in WORLD'S FINEST to Bob Haney and J.M. DeMatteis.

ADVENTURE goes monthly at the 40c size with Len's first issue; its two features are a brand-new version of Starman, and Plastic Man. Len Wein had scripted the first pair of Plas tales, with regular artists Joe Staton and Bob Smith, before he was made editor; with #469 Martin Pasko (who has been succeeded on the "World's Greatest Superheroes" newspaper strip by Paul Levitz) is taking on the assignment. Starman replaces the previously-announced Adam Strange strip as it was Len Wein who wanted to script it; if he's the editor, he can't be the scripter! The artist for the feature will be Steve Ditko.

Starting with the April issue, #489, DETECTIVE becomes a monthly Dollar Comic; Black Lightning will move over then from WORLD'S FINEST.

BATMAN #321 is, says Paul Levitz, "the best Batman of the year"--and he should know, he's the editor! It features a cover by Garcia Lopez, script by Wein, art by Simonson & Giordano, and the return of Batman's arch-foe, The Joker.

The DC COMICS PRESENTS schedule: #17 guest-stars Firestorm, by Gerry Conway & Garcia Lopez, followed by Zatanna (Conway, Dick Dillin, and Frank Chiaramonte), Green Arrow (by O'Neil and Garcia Lopez), Batgirl (by O'Neil and Joe Staton), and Elongated Man (scripted by Gerry Conway) in #21.

SUPERMAN FAMILY #200 has all the regular features linked into one full-length story scripted by Gerry Conway. The art on the various chapters will be done by Bob Oksner, Lopez, Saviuk and Win Mortimer.

The 12-page GL story by Len Wein & Dave Cockrum originally done for ADVENTURE will appear in GL #128, within a "frame" by O'Neil & Staton.

Due to the success of the 3-issue WORLD OF KRYPTON, two more "mini-series" are planned for 1980. Out in March to May will be THE LEGEND OF THE BATMAN, edited by Levitz; in August to October comes UNTOLD TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, with Jack C. Harris as editor.

WORLD'S FINEST #260 includes the 17-page Black Lightning story that would have been in BL #12. WF #261 sees the debut of a new feature to be seen periodically in various DC comics, "JLA Data Bank" -- it will tell readers all about Hawkman. The scripter is Bob "Answer Man" Rozakis --art is by newcomers Ed Barretto and Dave Simons.

GREEN LANTERN #123 has GL back in solo action; Denny O'Neil and Joe Staton are the regular team, with Frank McLaughlin the guest inker for #124. From #125, Joe hopes to ink his own pencils.

THE BEST OF DC DIGEST #5 (dated May/June) will be 128 pages long (but still 95 cents), featuring the best DC stories of 1979 as selected by all DC's editors, and edited by Julius Schwartz. Issue 6, back to the normal 96 pages, will feature The Legion of Super-Heroes, edited by Jack C. Harris.

BRAVE & BOLD #160 features Batman and Supergirl by Cary Burkett & Jim Aparo; #161 brings back Sgt Rock.

DETECTIVE #487 has the debut of Oddman, Steve Ditko's new hero. #488 has Johnny Craig illustrating Denny O'Neil's "Tales of Gotham City" feature.

UNEXPECTED #196 sees the book reverting to the 40 cent monthly format. However, issue 200 will still be a dollar comic; besides a Kaluta cover and a 25-page "Doorway to Nightmare" strip by Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers, the book's old star, Johnny Peril, will return in a story written by Mike Barr.

Jim Sherman is pencilling, inking, and also doing the cover for an issue of LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, while Mike Nasser has done two issues, starting with probably #261.

A new member (Black Lightning?) will join the JLA while an older, established member will resign.

Kurt Schaffenberger and Dave Hunt are now the regular art team for THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY -- issue 1 is dated January.

The Wonder Twins have their own 8-page back-up feature in SUPER FRIENDS #28.

Bob Smith has inked BATMAN #319.

DC has licensed several fan publishers the rights to reprint a number of collectors' favourites on top-quality paper, similar to Sabre. Five projects have been planned so far, including the Goodwin/Simonson Manhunter series and Steve Ditko's Shade -- including the unpublished SHADE #9.

John Byrne will be doing some work for DC --possibly the 3-part LEGEND OF THE BATMAN series, written by Len Wein, and probably at least one Batman story for DETECTIVE.

Don Heck is the new regular FLASH artist with #280, moving across from the Scarlet Speedster's now-ended ADVENTURE series.

Dan Spiegel is drawing a special Christmas issue (#34) of JONAH HEX.

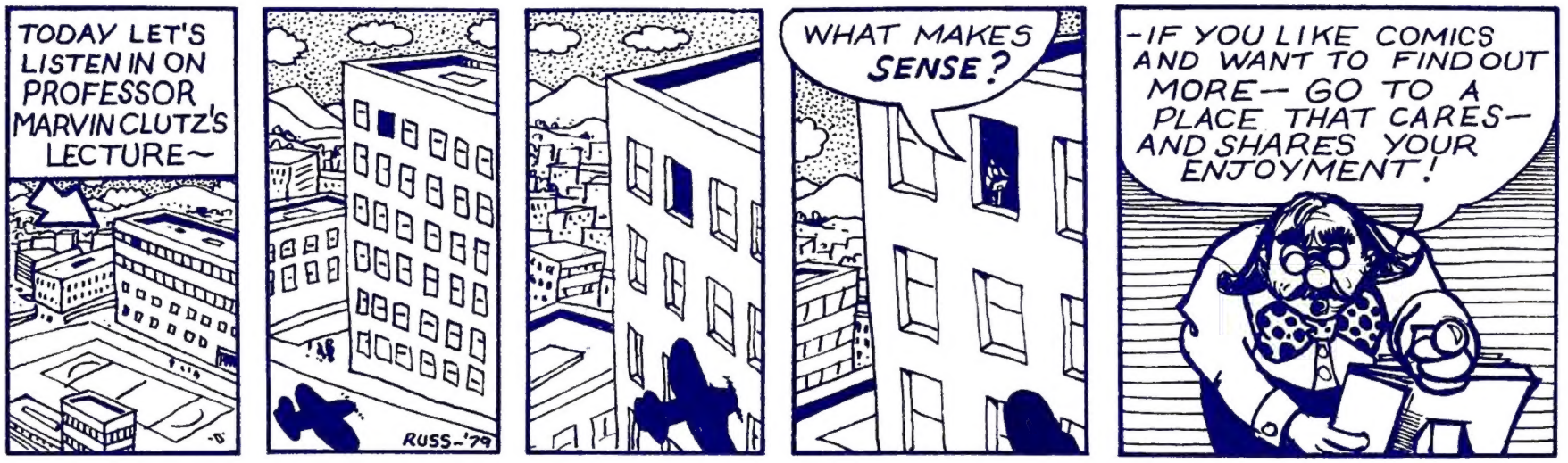
WONDER WOMAN #265 & 266 have 12-page lead stories by Conway & Delbo, inked by Giella and Colletta respectively; the 5-page back-up stories feature Wonder Girl, by E. Nelson Bridwell and Ric Estrada.

Steve Mitchell is inking the Dick Giordano Batgirl art for DETECTIVE COMICS #487, and also the Garcia Lopez art for the Firestorm issue of DC COMICS PRESENTS, #17.

WEIRD WAR TALES #84 is a full-length story of a PT boat that sails off the edge of reality, by J.M. DeMatteis & Tenny Henson. Len Wein is thinking of putting "The War That Time Forgot" into this title as a series, and also giving HOUSE OF MYSTERY a continuing feature.

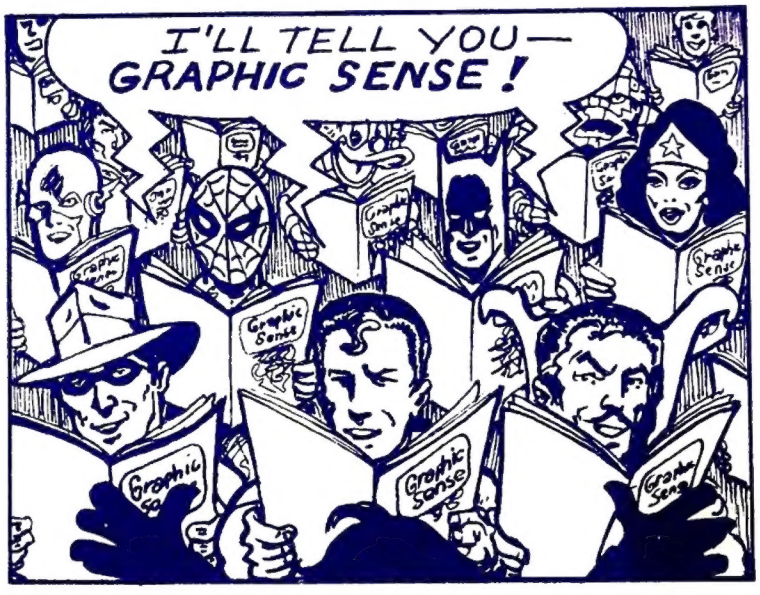
SUPERCLUTZ

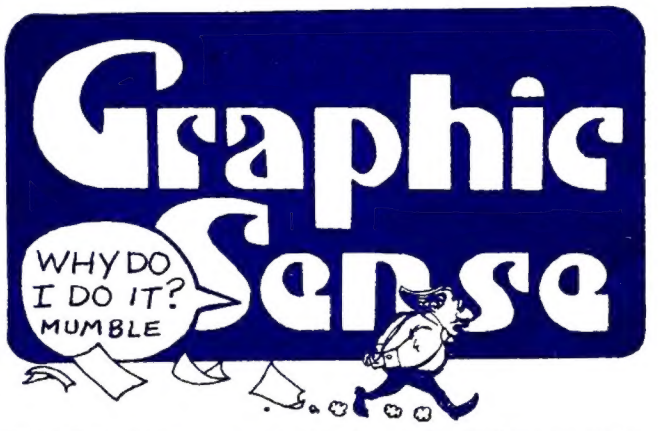
THE EVER-GOING ADVENTURES OF A MILD MANNERED PROFESSOR


TODAY LET'S LISTEN IN ON PROFESSOR MARVIN CLUTZ'S LECTURE~
RUSS-'79
WHAT MAKES SENSE?
-IF YOU LIKE COMICS AND WANT TO FIND OUT MORE— GO TO A PLACE THAT CARES— AND SHARES YOUR ENJOYMENT!

IF YOU ALSO LIKE—SF—FANTASY—TV—FILMS—NEWS—REVIEWS—OPINIONS—ARTICLES—LETTERS—COMIC STRIPS AND INTERVIEWS!
YOU OUGHT TO FIND A MAGAZINE THAT WILL CATER FOR ALL THAT!!
....IT MAKES SENSE!

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT A FANZINE THAT ACTS LIKE A PRO.... THAT CARRIES SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.... DONE BY SOME OF THE BEST IN FANDOM! AND....
...THAT RECOUNTS THE GLORIES OF THE PAST...
SILVER ZAFER
....AND THE SPECULATIVE FUTURE!
STAR TREK
ALIEN
STAR WARS
BUCK ROGERS
BLACK HOLE





Published six times a year for the comics fantasy fan with 44 large pages in colour. Sample issue 50p. One year subscription £3.00 (inc. postage). Subscribers will also receive extra fanzine supplements. Please made cheques/postal orders payable to G. Kelly.

Gez Kelly

The Marvel annuals and other 52-page books are rising from 60 to 75 cents; the dollar black & white magazines rise to $1.25 also, effective from HOWARD THE DUCK? ≠2, DRACULA ≠1, SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN ≠45, and MARVEL PREVIEW ≠18. The colour magazines have not been effected.

"Warriors of the Shadow Realm", Marvel's major 3-part Weirdworld story by Doug Moench, John Buscema, Rudy Nebres, & Peter Ledger, appearing in MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL 11-13, is scheduled to come out in June, August, and October, to allow more time on sale. Issue 14 is the adaptation of the movie "Meteor" by Ralph Macchio, Gene Colan & Tom Palmer, while ≠15 should star the Rolling Stones, by Doug Moench & Bill Sienkiewicz.

Upcoming Annual release dates: August 21st brings AMAZING SPIDER-MAN and FANTASTIC FOUR, August 28th X-MEN, HULK and THOR, September 18th MARVEL TEAM-UP, STAR WARS, MICRONAUTS (three stories by Bill Mantlo & Steve Ditko), and SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN, and September 25th CONAN.

SUPERMAN-WONDER WOMAN-BATMAN-AQUAMAN-ROBIN
WITH ZAN AND JAYNA—THE WONDER TWINS—
"THE SPACEMEN WHO STOLE ATLANTIS!"
40¢
NO. 27 DEC.
THE SUPER FRIENDS
YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR ELEMENT, AQUAMAN! ONLY I CAN FLY UP TO THAT SHIP AND BATTLE THOSE ALIEN KIDNAPPERS!
NO! THOSE ARE MY PEOPLE IN THE CITY!
AND I'M GOING TO SAVE THEM!

On the WHAT IF front, Steven Grant, Alan Kupperberg and Al Gordon ask "What If The Avengers Were The Last Super-Heroes on Earth" --to which Tony Isabella, Gil Kane & Frank Giacoia say "What If Gwen Stacy Hadn't Died?" Don Glut, Fred Kida & Dave Simons bring us "What If Doc Doom Became a Hero", while "What If Doctor Strange Became a Disciple of Dormamma" comes from Peter Gillis, Tom Sutton, and Bruce Patterson. "What If Spider-Man Had Caught the Burglar" is being prepared by Gillis and Pat Broderick, while a sequel to WHAT IF ≠1 is on the cards from Bill Mantlo and Gene Colan, "What If the Fantastic Four Broke Up?" Tom DeFalco and Alan Kupperberg are still backing "What If the Avengers Had Fought the Kree-Skrull War Without the Help of Rick Jones", while a trio of short end-of-the-world stories featuring Iron Man, Dr Doom and Thor are planned by Peter Gillis & Ron Wilson. What if we talk about one or two more titles before we run out of space?

Despite the cancellation of the TV show, the BATTLESTAR GALACTICA comic will carry on as long as sales hold up. Pat Broderick has drawn ≠10, before the return of Simonson.

MAN-THING ≠1 will appear in October; Mike Fleisher, Jim Mooney & Bob Wiacek are the team responsible. SUB-MARINER, KING CONAN (co-starring his son CONN), and THE HAMMER OF THOR are still unscheduled.

Dave Cockrum is now working free-lance.

Marvel have reinstated a number of superhero reprint books, and also started some new reprint mags, with famous names. MARVEL SUPER ACTION, MARVEL'S GREATEST COMICS, TALES TO ASTONISH, AMAZING ADVENTURES, and a 75-cent new incarnation of FANTASY MASTERPIECES are among the additions, which start with December cover-dates, but were not on advance order lists so won't be on sale generally from the comics dealers until later.

A Marvel Comics Group "Special Edition" ("big special back-to-school issue!"), running to twelve pages plus ads, will be issued in the autumn in American newspaper Sunday Supplements. It's by Marv Wolfman, Sal Buscema & Al Milgrom, and has Spider-Man battling Hulk.

MARVEL PREVIEW ≠20 is a photo-album issue, based on the Japanese Spider-Man TV show. Issue 21 stars Moon Knight by Moench & Sienkiewicz with a Shroud back-up by Steven Grant, Mark Gruenwald & Steve Ditko. And then comes "Merlin", by Doug Moench and John Buscema.

HOWARD THE DUCK? (as the black & white magazine is titled) ≠2 has a 10-page story explaining why Howard is wearing trousers -- according to Bill Mantlo, a villain called "D. Isney" is to blame, get it? To get round this change, Bill intends to plot a lot of stories where Howard goes naked — unless DC Comics Inc veto this. They, as I'm sure you'll remember, have a copyrighted hero called The Flash...

Marvel have bought the rights to the STAR TREK motion picture; Marv Wolfman and Dave Cockrum are doing a SUPER SPECIAL adaptation, which will be followed by a regular Star Trek comic, expected to live long and prosper.

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT will host a new Ant-Man tale, Star-Lord's first Code-constrained story (by Moench & Sutton), and a Quicksilver quickie by Jo Duffy and Al Weiss.

MARVEL TEAM-UP will soon feature a two-parter drawn by Mike Golden & Terry Austin, with The Angel and Ka-Zar as Spider-Man's guests. Mike Nasser has drawn a Nightcrawler guest-shot here, and various insect characters (Wasp, Ant-Man...) are also expected sooner or later.

A member of the X-MEN will leave the team soon, and a new mutant will join. Also expected is the final battle with Mutant X... One of the new reprint monthlies features the X-Men; other titles reprint Silver Surfer and Sub-Mariner.

John Byrne has not suffered a heart attack, as was rumoured -- he was, however, quite ill for a while. Perez replaces him on AVENGERS.

Kerry Gammill is the new POWER MAN penciler, from ≠61--≠60 was by Marie Severin & Steve Leialoha.

Jerry Bingham takes over IRON MAN from ≠131, with Bob Layton staying on inks. Bingham has also drawn the Black Panther stories in PREMIERE 51-53; ≠54 is by Ed Hannigan & Bob Budiansky, still with T'Challa but "very Conanesque in nature". IRON MAN 131 & 132 guest-star The Hulk, who also appears in DAREDEVIL 162. The New Ant-Man returns in IRON MAN ≠133.

Marvel's production expert, Lenny Grow, has lost his job; a Cadence vice-president, Milt Schiffman, is to replace him.

Marvel has optioned out film rights to 7 of its characters, including Spider-Man, the Silver Surfer and Kid Colt. All the various Marvel characters save the Hulk are now off television, and the Hulk has slipped very badly in the ratings and is not expected to be renewed for the 1980-81 season. Captain America will be re-run, but Dr Strange, The Human Torch, Sub-Mariner and possibly Ms Marvel are available for option.

Disco Dazzler will be introduced in X-MEN, and rejected as a member -- this character, designed by John Romita jr, will also guest in MARVEL TEAM-UP before she gets her own title.

SHE-HULK ≠1, cover-dated February, has been written by Stan Lee and drawn by John Buscema; no permanent team has been assigned yet, but Frank Springer has taken over a soap opera newspaper strip and is therefore unlikely to work on it.

EPIC is currently scheduled to appear in early 1980; a second magazine combining SF and fantasy comics and articles is due, too.

Simon & Shuster has postponed all plans on doing any more Marvel novels and paperback reprint books, although they will be doing a few more large-size paperback collections, including Spidey, the FF and Dr Strange. All paperbacks thus far announced will be out in time for Christmas sales. They are also to handle a 1980 Dr Strange calendar.

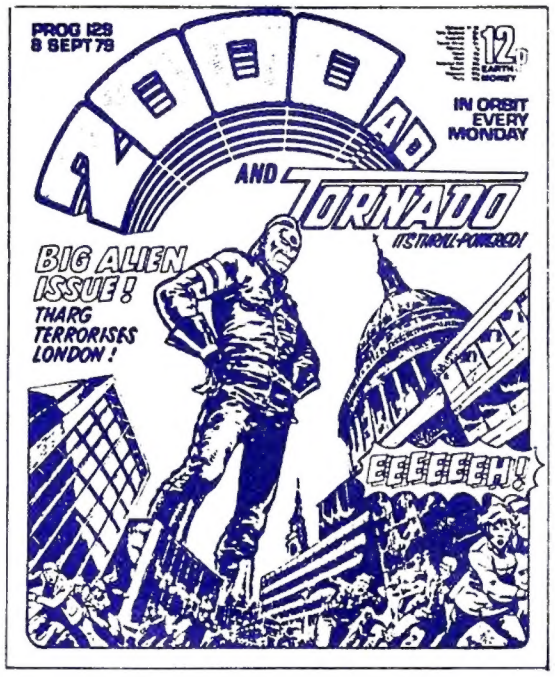
GHOST RIDER is going monthly from ≠40, the January cover-dated issue; Jim Shooter & Bob Layton are collaborating on a long GR story, possibly for a 1980 Annual.

Bill Mantlo takes on HULK, from issue 245, passing on PETER PARKER to Marv Wolfman (as of ≠41), who in turn gives FANTASTIC FOUR to Archie Goodwin from ≠218. Bill is also doing two Treasury Editions -- one is a superhero olympics, with more guest heroes and villains than you could shake a trouser-wearing duck at, while the other has Spider-Man and Hulk at the Winter Olympics.

Roger Stern, John Buscema & Joe Sinnott are doing four special 16-page Hulk comics; Hulk is solo in ≠1, with the Angel as guest-star in ≠2, the Thing in ≠3, and Sub-Mariner in ≠4. They are to be Coca-Cola giveaways, tested in the south-west of the USA shortly and, if successful, launched nationwide next summer.

Mike Golden should return to MICRONAUTS with ≠18; he is doing all the book's covers up to then, too.

IT'S THE BIG ONE!
2000 AD
PROG 128
1 SEP 79
IN ORBIT EVERY MONDAY
AND TORNADO
I'M ARRESTING THIS SHIP IN THE NAME OF MEGA-CITY ONE! SURRENDER NOW AND NO-ONE WILL GET HURT!
BATTLE OF THE BLACK ATLANTIC!
SEE JUDGE DREDD



2000 A.D. prog 127, the issue in which it incorporates TORNADO, is the last issue printed in the current size, with the bright colouring. Next week it reverts to letter-press, with a larger page size (art area 209mm by 255mm) with less bold colours, from the same printer as TAMMY and MISTY.

Three TORNADO features continue into 2000 A.D. Blackhawk, written by Alan Grant and Kelvin Gosnell and drawn by Belardinelli, has the hero (sans hawk) picked up by a tractor beam into an alien spacecraft. He becomes a space gladiator in "The Games". The first four episodes of Wolfie Smith are drawn by Ian Gibson; and then Vano rejoins scripter Tom Tully. And Captain Klep continues on the back cover for the first two weeks, before vanishing for a while.

To make room in 2000 A.D., Dan Dare has ended after a 26-issue run. The "Project Overkill" series was also terminated more quickly than planned, after 8 instead of 12 episodes.

The 8th September issue is without the Blackhawk strip, due to production problems. Instead, will you welcome "A Day In The Life of Tharg", by Alan Grant and Ezquerra. The ABC Warriors are also off to Mars in that issue on the mission they were formed for, and the back cover has a map of the Red Planet.

The following week, the Judge Dredd strip is drawn by Dave Gibbons; he should become a regular artist on that strip, but before that is sharing ABC Warriors with McMahon.

The next "boom issue" is scheduled for 17th November. The adaptation of the first "Stainless Steel Rat" novel (in twelve instalments, scripted by Gosnell & drawn by Ezquerra) begins then, replacing the ABC Warriors; Disaster 1990 will probably end then too. I.P.C. policy is dictating an increase to six stories per week (not counting Klep) then, so a couple of other series will debut then too. "Mars Force", the SF serial developed by Richard Burton for TORNADO before its demise and drawn by Belardinelli, will run in 2000 A.D. eventually, but probably not at the same time as The Stainless Steel Rat, as it's not normal to run two strips by the same artist in the same issue, especially when the artist has such a distinctive style. Richard is working on TIGER at present, with hopes of moving over to Tharg's band once a vacancy occurs.

The recent Reader Survey gleaned 875 replies -- 58% from people who'd followed 2000 A.D. from prog one. 39% rated Judge Dredd their favourite character, and 24% voted "future war" their favourite kind of story--which explains why one project due to debut on November 17th is "The V. C.s", a "Starship Troopers" kind of space war strip. The initials stand for "Vacuum Cleaners"--though the name is subject to change! The majority of the readership is in the 11 to 13 age-group (16.7% 11, 18.1% 12, 18.7% 13), with 9.6% 14 year olds, and 14.5% 15 or older.

Instead of a Dan Dare Annual next year, plans are afoot for a 1981 Judge Dredd Annual. It is hoped to give this a bigger budget than normal, to allow more original material and involve 2000 A.D.'s better, regular artists.

The science fact 'n' fiction newstand magazine AD ASTRA is planning a feature on 2000 A.D. shortly.

At Marvel, the plans for HULK COMIC we reported last time have not been followed through, and at present the only regular British strip is "Black Knight" by Steve Parkhouse, Paul Neary & John Stokes. The other strips should return soon, though, including Hulk by Steve Moore, Neary and David Lloyd, and Nightraven, still drawn by John Bolton.

MARVEL COMIC ended with #352, dated July 25th--the numbering is continued with the new monthly MARVEL SUPERHEROES, which is featuring the old X-Men, Ms Marvel and The Avengers. Dated August 1st, adding 8 pages (to 32, still only 10p) came THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN WEEKLY, incorporating Marvel Comic and continuing its Godzilla, Skull and Daredevil features.

The date and venue of the next comic mart in Birmingham has been changed. It will now be held on 1st December at the Central Hall in Corporation Street--also booked there for 1980 are marts on March 8th, June 21st, and October 4th.

In London, the "Comicbook Marketplaces" arranged by Rob Barrow at Lyndhurst Hall will be held in 1980 on February 9, March 8, May 10, June 7, August 9, September 20, and November 8. Arranged by Titan Distributors, "The Original Comic Mart" series moves to the Central Hall, Westminster (just opposite Westminster Abbey) --the first one will be on November 3rd, followed in 1980 by January 19th, July 12th, October 18th, and December 13th. In 1981 dates announced are February 7th, June 6th, August 6th, October 17th, and December 12th, while Titan's plans also include 1982, on the corresponding dates. All these dates are Saturdays. And Titan also mention Easter conventions each and every April--dates and venue to follow.

ROMEO BROWN in "THE ARABIAN KNIGHT"

by Jim Holdaway & Peter O'Donnell

84 strips reduced in size--the second in the "Daily Strips" reprint series begun with "Garth and The Bride of Jenghiz Khan". 75 pence from:

JOHN DAKIN

The Society of Comics Enthusiasts has been officially closed down; Nige Balloch intends to pay outstanding 1979 subscriptions in the form of a 4-issue sub to THE COMIC REVIEW -- further credit and 1980 dues will be refunded. However, a new Society is being planned by a group of fans including Rick Catilli; more details next time, I'm sure.

THE U.K. HEROINES SHOWCASE #2 has been published in America by Steven R. Johnson in association with Martin Lock, who acted as British Editor; issue one was published in 1976 as part of Bem #9, which was a double issue. Inside the full colour covers by Lela Dowling (an American artist whose portfolio is due shortly from art publishers Schanes & Schanes) is art by Guy Lawley, Andy Purves, Joe Matthews, Superswipe, Mercy Van Vlack, and others, while text contributions include "Salute To Spitfire" by Maureen James, "Minutes of the Joint Protest Meeting of the Super Heroine Equality Group" by Kathleen (who else?) Glancy, "The British Heroine Scene" by Ruan Lanihorne, and articles on Purdy, Spider-Woman, and comicbook battles of the sexes. This fanzine sells for $1.50 in America; copies have been air-mailed to this country, and are available from the Bem editorial address at 80p each, post free, for 32 6.5" by 8.3" pages. Or as a special offer, for £1 (cheques or postal orders payable to M. Lock, please) you can purchase issue 2 and issue 1 together.

The shortage of new material in HULK WEEKLY this summer has been caused partly by budget restrictions, and partly because Steve Parkhouse, Pat Mills, Paul Neary, Dave Gibbons, Steve Dillon, and David Lloyd have all been busy on a new weekly comic due out on October 10th. We can't divulge Who the lead feature is -- but it will be reprinted as a 40 cent U.S. Marvel monthly, if all goes well! -ML

ART CREDITS:

Eddie Campbell: 11-17 (pencils); Michael-Jan Gibas: 24; Steve Gibson: 26 (right); Dave Harwood: 7-10, 11-17 (inks); Mike Matthews: 2 (right); Angus McKie: 27 (lower logo); Terry Moore: 2 (lower), 25, 28; Russ Nicholson: 2 (left); Luke Rainford: 23; Superswipe: 26 (left); Bryan Talbot: front cover; Bob Watkins: 27; G. Whittaker: 19; Colin Wilson: 21.

PLANET TALE

THE FIRST PLANET WE REACHED WAS SCOTT'S 403. WE'D BEEN IN FLIGHT FOR A MONTH OR MORE, AND THE WHOLE CREW WAS HOPING THAT CAPTAIN RUSSELL WOULD BE ALLOWING SHORE LEAVE

AIR BREATHABLE, AND NO HARMFUL BACTERIA, CAPTAIN.

FINE, LIEUTENANT. ANY SHOTS OF THE LANDSCAPE YET?

JUST COMING, I THINK.

WORDS: Martin Lock

PICTURES: Dave Harwood

LOOKS A NICE PLANET TO VISIT.

LIEUTENANT FL'FF WAS THE MOST POPULAR MEMBER OF THE BLUE COMMAND TEAM... AND SHE HAD THE SKILL TO KEEP THE COMPUTERS PURRING

REMARKABLY LIKE YOUR EARTH IN MANY WAYS, CAPTAIN. VERY SIMILAR VEGETATION...

...AND ANIMAL LIFE, TOO.

1

AND CIVILISATION, FL'FF! THAT SETTLES IT---WE'RE GOING DOWN!

TYPICAL NAVY THINKING---THE SUBTLE APPROACH, SENDING ALL FIVE KILOMETRES OF H.M.S. CONQUEROR DOWN TO LAND ON THE PLANET

BUT WE IN STARBOARD SECURITY WATCH-TWO WERE HAPPY---SOON FRESH AIR AND SOFT GROUND WOULD BE ONLY A LADDER AWAY

WITH THE FORCE OF OUR LANDING, WE HAD TO COME IN TWENTY KILOMETRES FROM THE NEAREST TOWN. THE NATIVES COULD HARDLY MISS SEEING US, THOUGH---ALL WE'D HAVE TO DO IS WAIT, AND THEY'D COME RUNNING

OR SO WE THOUGHT!

THAT'S ME ON THE RIGHT, BY THE WAY

NO SIGN OF ANY REACTION YET, LIEUTENANT.

DON'T YOU THINK THAT ODD, CAPTAIN RUSSELL? WE'VE BEEN HERE ALMOST FOUR HOURS.

LT. FL'FF

2

WE'D BETTER GET BUSY THEN, LIEUTENANT. I WANT A FULL DEFENSIVE PERIMETER ESTABLISHED RIGHT AWAY!

FIFTEEN KILOMETRES OF SECURITY FENCE IN TWO HOURS? WHEN OUR CAPTAIN ASKS, WE SWING INTO ACTION...

...AND SOON WE COULD START TO FEEL SECURE

FRANK, YOU CAN DRIVE THIS BUGGY, CAN'T YOU?

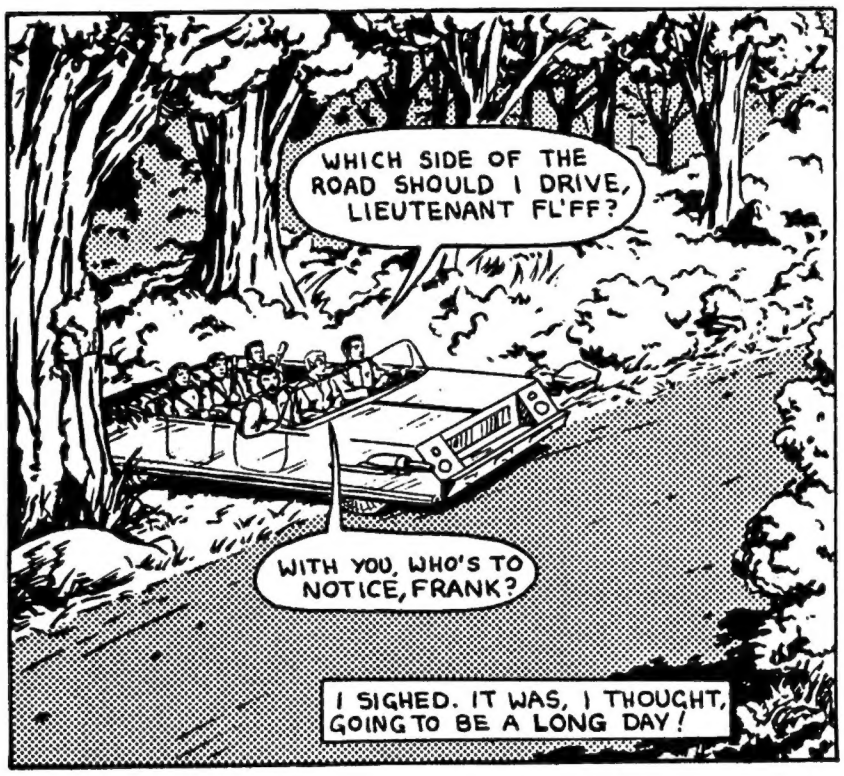
SURELY, SIR. I SURMISE IF THE LOCALS WON'T COME TO US, WE'D BEST GO TO THEM. BUT WON'T IT BE NIGHTFALL SOON?

NOT ON THIS WORLD, CORPORAL. BY MY CALCULATIONS, SUNSET IS DUE IN ---OH, 27 HOURS, 32 MINUTES

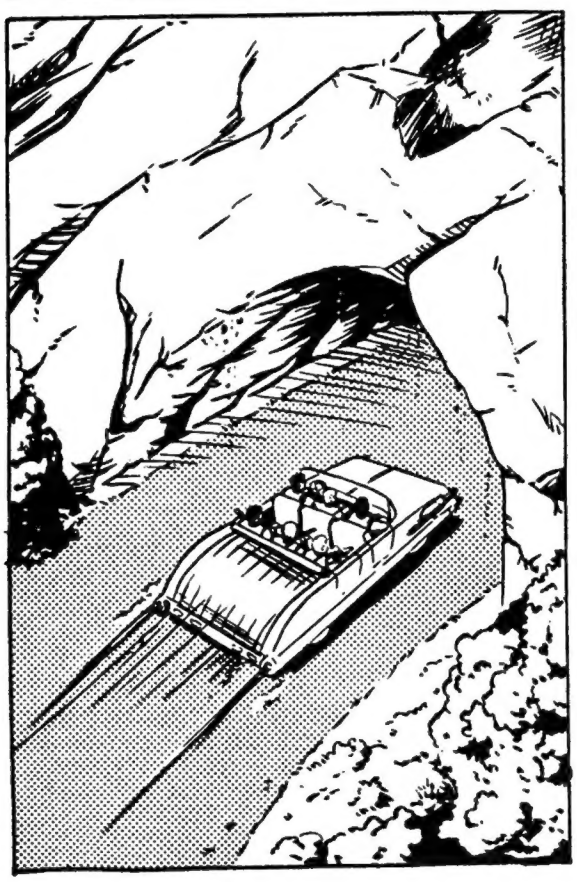
SO HOW WAS I TO KNOW? AND THE PLANET ROTATED SO SLOWLY IT WAS ALREADY MID-AFTERNOON. ITS DAY IS MORE LIKE OUR MONTH...

ANY REPORT FROM MIKE IN THE SCOUTER UP THERE, LIEUTENANT?

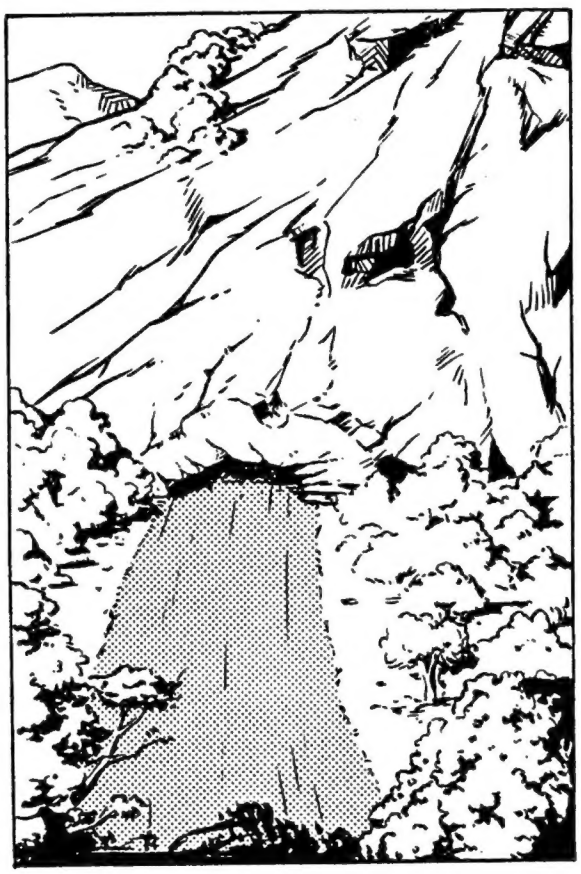
HE HASN'T SEEN ANYTHING MOVING, BUT HE SAYS THERE'S A ROAD NEARBY.


WHICH SIDE OF THE ROAD SHOULD I DRIVE, LIEUTENANT FL'FF?
WITH YOU, WHO'S TO NOTICE, FRANK?
I SIGHED. IT WAS, I THOUGHT, GOING TO BE A LONG DAY!

AND A GOOD STORY IT IS; "THE WAITABITS" BY ERIC FRANK RUSSELL ---I RECOMMEND IT.

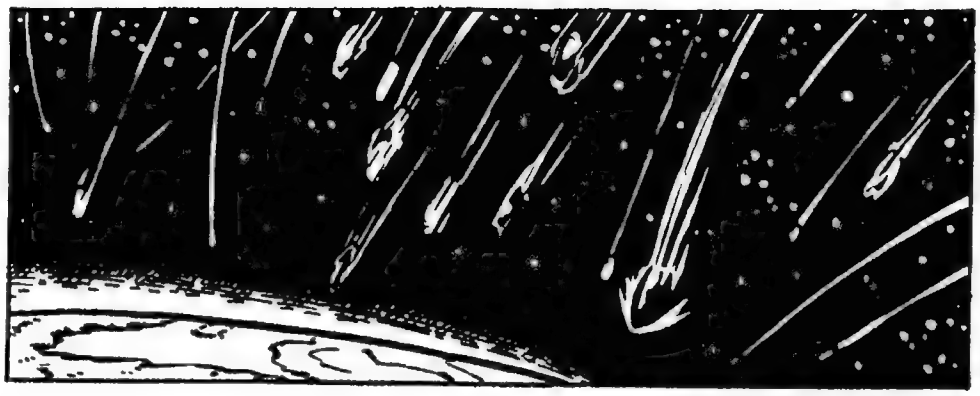


HOWEVER, THIS STORY HAS A DIFFERENT ENDING, I'M AFRAID



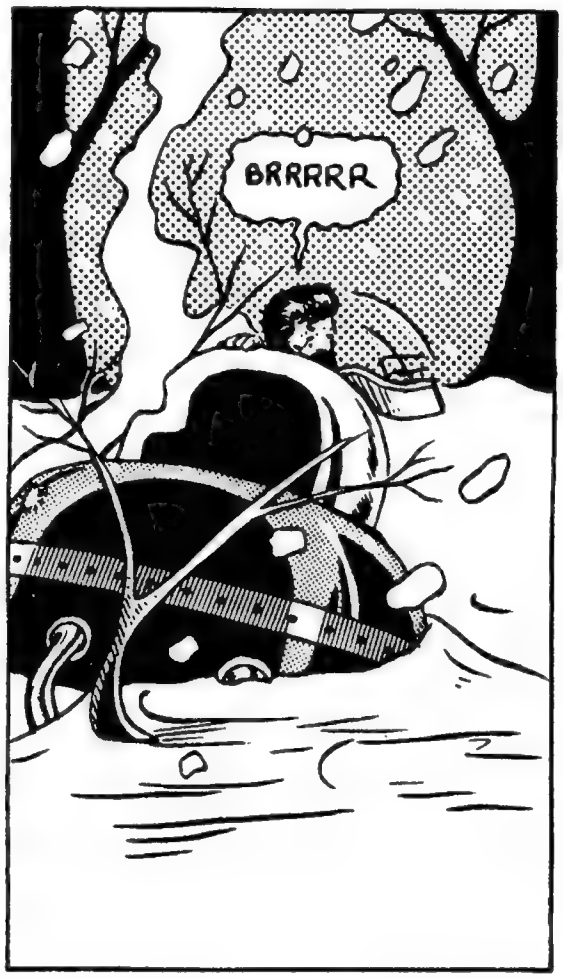
AND THIS IS IT----

TWO YEARS AGO. A METEOR HAIL ENTERED THE UPPER REACHES OF OUR ATMOSPHERE. SOME OF THE ROCKS DIDN'T BURN OUT, BUT CAME DOWN IN THE ATLANTIC OVER THE CONTINENTAL SHELF. THIS WAS ALL NOTED AT THE TIME.



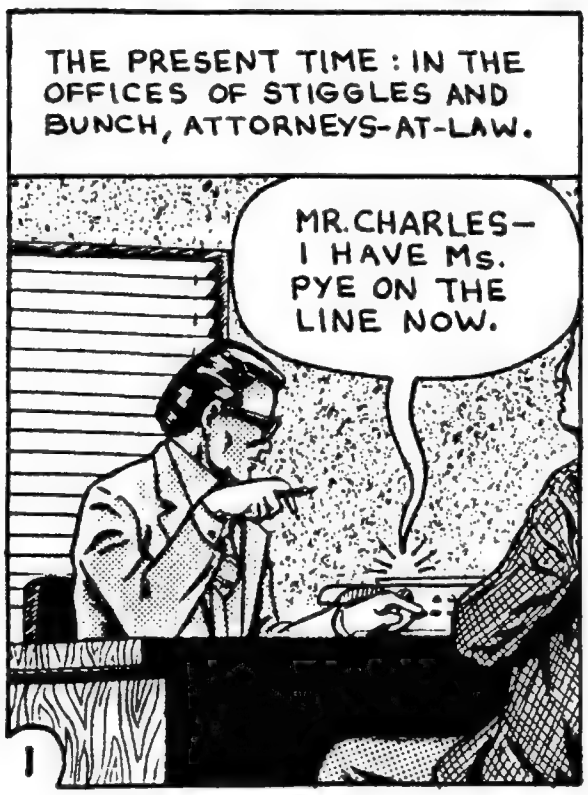
BUT IT REMAINS UNKNOWN THAT ON ONE OF THESE ROCKS A SMALL ALIEN CRAFT RODE PIGGY-BACK TO THE SURFACE OF OUR PLANET...

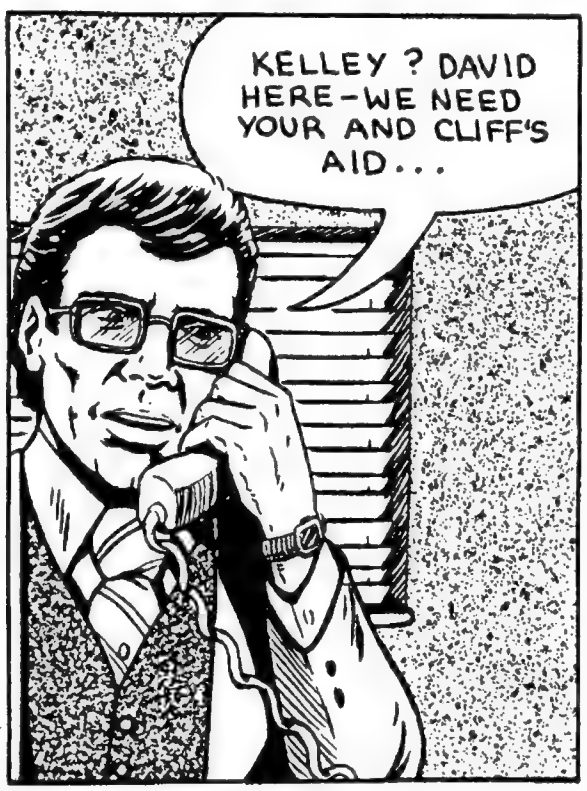
AND SOMEHOW FOUND ITS WAY TO THE WEST COAST OF EIRE, WHERE IT EMBEDDED ITSELF IN A BOG



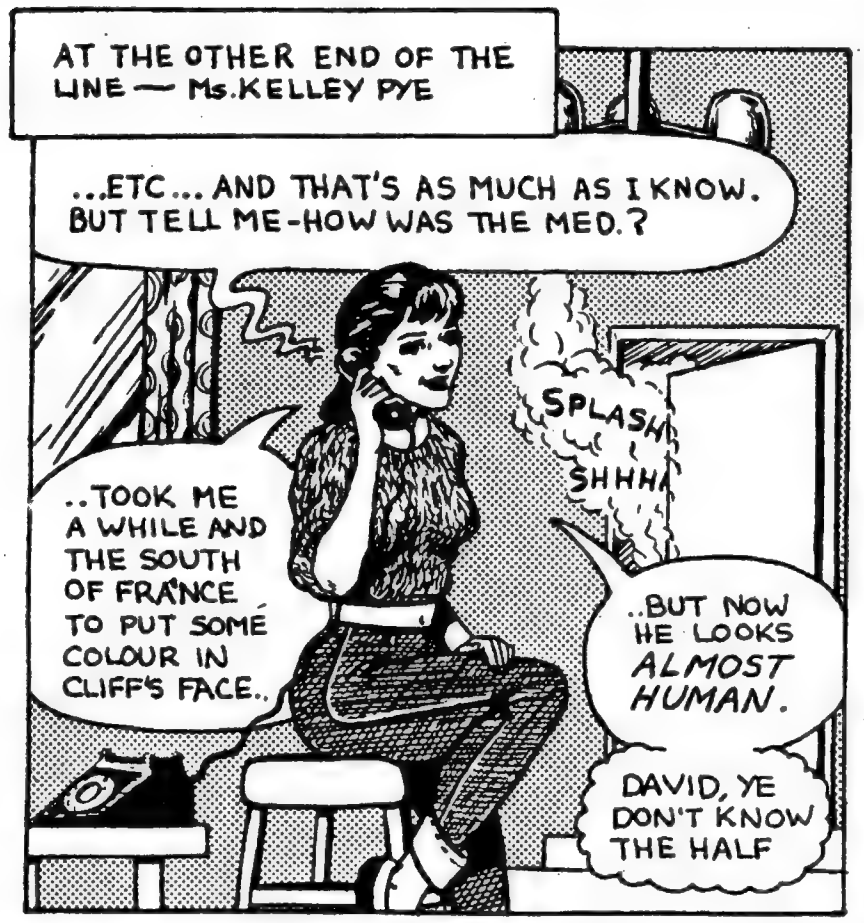
INTRODUCING:

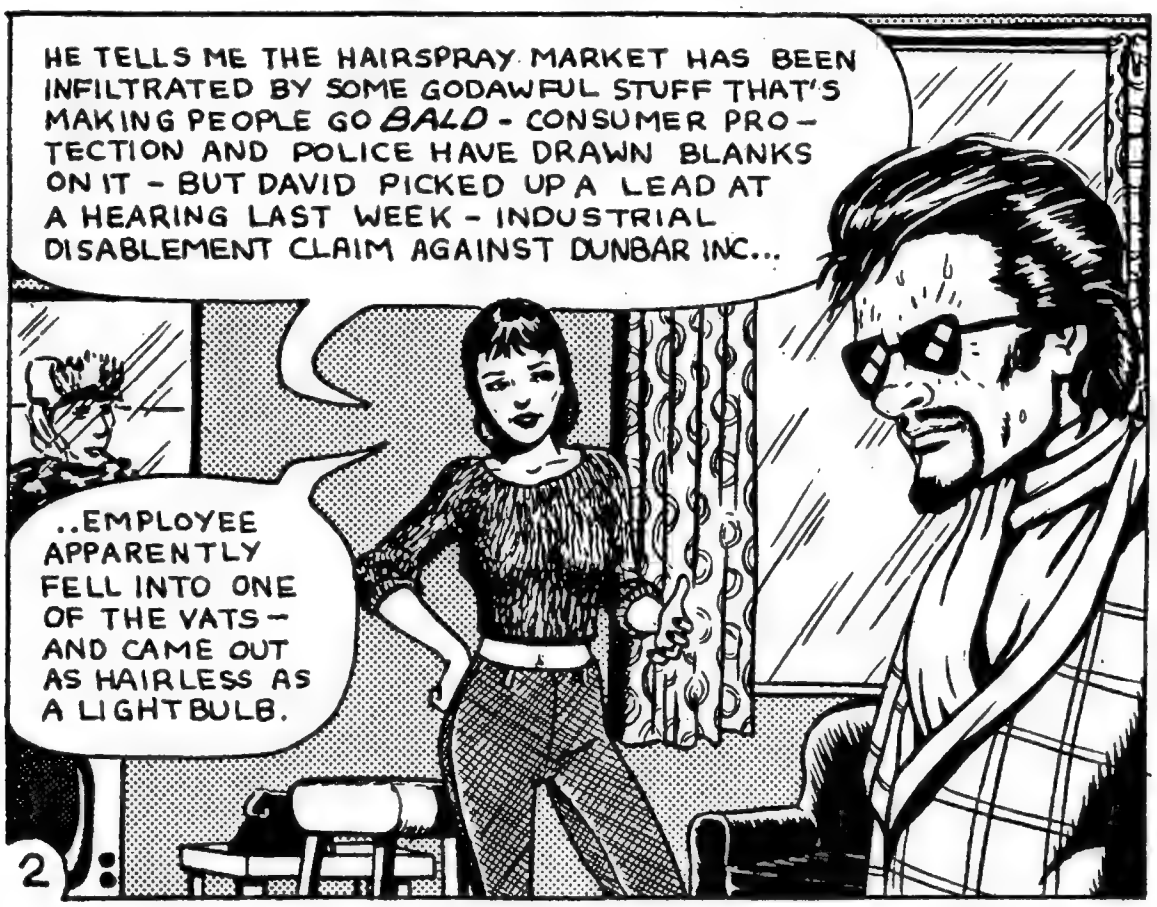
CLIFF, THE MOON-MAN





..in..'THE BIG HAIRSPRAY RUMPUS' by Campbell/Harwood.


AT THE OTHER END OF THE LINE — Ms. KELLEY PYE
...ETC... AND THAT'S AS MUCH AS I KNOW. BUT TELL ME-HOW WAS THE MED.?
..TOOK ME A WHILE AND THE SOUTH OF FRANCE TO PUT SOME COLOUR IN CLIFF'S FACE..
SPLASH
SHHH
..BUT NOW HE LOOKS ALMOST HUMAN.
DAVID, YE DON'T KNOW THE HALF


HE TELLS ME THE HAIRSPRAY MARKET HAS BEEN INFILTRATED BY SOME GODAWFUL STUFF THAT'S MAKING PEOPLE GO BALD - CONSUMER PRO-TECTION AND POLICE HAVE DRAWN BLANKS ON IT - BUT DAVID PICKED UP A LEAD AT A HEARING LAST WEEK - INDUSTRIAL DISABLEMENT CLAIM AGAINST DUNBAR INC...
..EMPLOYEE APPARENTLY FELL INTO ONE OF THE VATS — AND CAME OUT AS HAIRLESS AS A LIGHTBULB.
2

FURTHER INVESTIGATION TAKES KELLEY AND CLIFF TO A CERTAIN FACTORY, WHICH THEY CHECK OUT THROUGH A SKYLIGHT.
DAVID RECKONS THE FOUL WORK'S DONE LATE AT NIGHT ALL WE'VE GOT TO DO IS GET SOME 3-D EVIDENCE.
HEY! VOICES!

INSIDE, LIGHTS ARE TURNED ON

PSST-CLIFF- I RECOGNISE THAT MAN DOWN THERE-IT'S 'PESKY' DUNBAR -THE CRIMINAL LUNATIC!

SAME AS USUAL, MEN! CONSTITUENT X IN EVERY SECOND VAT AND CAREFUL NOT TO GET IT IN YOUR HAIR.

CLIFF, WE CAN'T LET THIS GO ON!

NO YOKING

GURGLE

CRAASH!

BLOW MY *!!☆! IT'S SUPERHEROES!

BLAT

CLIFF, YOU EEJIT!! GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO EXPLAI—

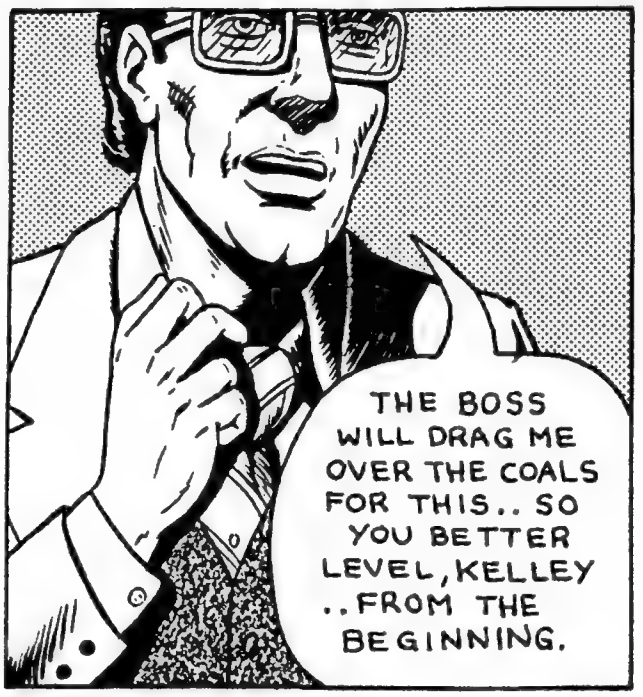
3

OH NO!!

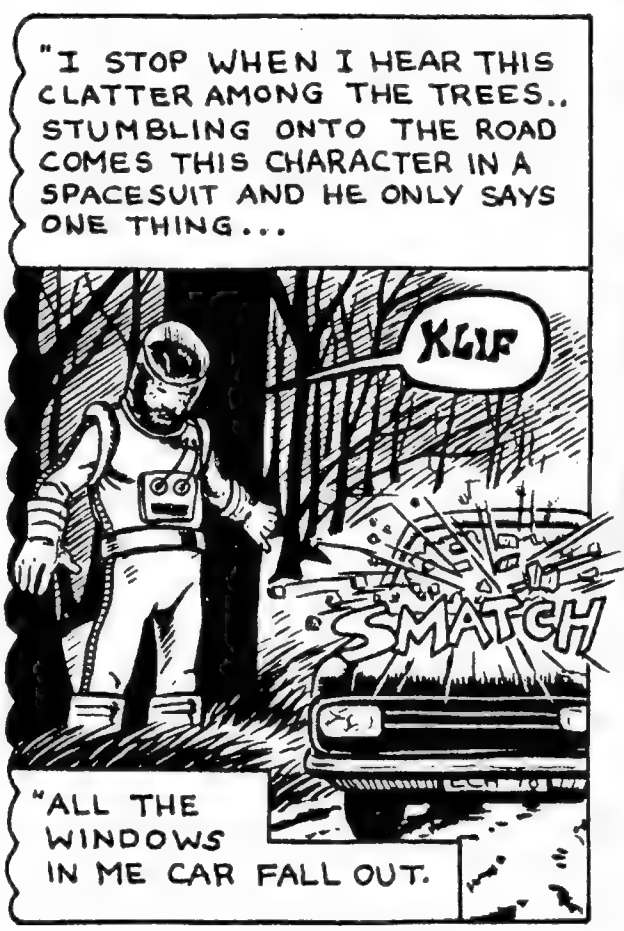
SPLASH

GARRRGGG!!

I HIRE YOU TO INVESTIGATE A FACTORY..AND YOU COME BACK AND SAY CLIFF DESTROYS IT..BY SHOUTING AT IT!?
AND..UH..DIDN'T CLIFF USED TO TO HAVE HAIR?
LOTS.


THE BOSS WILL DRAG ME OVER THE COALS FOR THIS.. SO YOU BETTER LEVEL, KELLEY ..FROM THE BEGINNING.

WELL, RIGHTO, DAVID. DON'T BELIEVE IT—BUT CLIFF'S FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
TWO YEARS AGO, DECEMBER, I'M DRIVING DOWN TO SEE ME MOTHER IN IRELAND...
4


"I STOP WHEN I HEAR THIS CLATTER AMONG THE TREES.. STUMBLING ONTO THE ROAD COMES THIS CHARACTER IN A SPACESUIT AND HE ONLY SAYS ONE THING...
KLIF
SMATCH
"ALL THE WINDOWS IN ME CAR FALL OUT.

"THEN HE TAKES ME TO SEE HIS SPACESHIP...

"WE BURY IT AND I TAKE HIM HOME TO MEET THE MAMMY.

MUM, THIS IS.. UH..CLIFF. HE'S FROM THE MOON.

DON'T BE SILLY, THERE AREN'T ONY PAYPLE ON THE MOON.

SO YE'VE BEEN THERE TO FIND OUT?

FUNNY! YE'LL BE STAYIN' FOR TAY, CLUFF?

"HE STAYS.... AND COMES BACK TO LONDON WITH ME. WITH HIS REMARKABLE ABILITIES AND MY CONTACTS I SEE THAT WE CAN MAKE A GOOD P.I. TEAM. SO WE DO A FEW JOBS FOR YOU THEN DUCK OUT FOR A FORTNIGHT IN THE SUN..."

Mummy CLIFF GOT A HAIR CUT

Love Kelley

THAT'LL SOUND JUST GREAT IN COURT. AT LEAST MY NAME'S NOT INVOLVED IN THIS TOMFOOLERY.

DON'T BE TOO SURE OF ANYTHING, DAVID. I THINK WE WERE FOLLOWED FROM THE DUNBAR DEBRIS.

800

IN THE KENSINGTON SUITE OF LADY 'ICE', FINANCIER.

TAKE A LETTER TO MR. DUNBAR.. "IN VIEW OF YOUR MISHANDLING OF THE NEW HAIRSPRAY PLANT I WITHDRAW MY SUPPORT FROM DUNBAR INDUSTRIES,"..SEND IT SPECIAL DELIVERY--NO, TAKE IT YOURSELF.

CHIK CHIK CH

EXPLOSIO

5

THAT DAME IS WORTH A STORY OF HER OWN BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S ONLY HER LETTER THAT INTERESTS US - HERE IT IS BEING RECEIVED BY PESKY DUNBAR AT HIS COUNTRY MANSION...

WHAT!?

SO I HAVE TO CLOSE UP SHOP! IT'S ALL THE FAULT OF THAT MEDDLING PAIR.. THINK THEY KNOW IT ALL.. WELL WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW IS THAT MY MAN FOLLOWED THEM AWAY FROM THE RUBBLE. KNOWING WHERE THEY LIVE GIVES ME THE ADVANTAGE ... AND BOY, AM I GOING TO *TAKE* ADVANTAGE!

DUNBAR'S MAD SCHEME FOR REVENGE BEGINS WITH... *THE ABDUCTION OF KELLEY PYE.*

ZZZZZ..

CLIFF GETS THE MESSAGE..

WE HAVE YOUR GIRL AT THE DOCKS

..AND GIVES CHASE..

..ON FOOT, IN THE RAIN.

BUT.. NOT LONG AFTER CLIFF LEAVES THE APARTMENT... PESKY COMES BACK IN, WITH KELLEY IN TOW.

THE FOOL! MY HIRELINGS WILL LEAD HIM ALL OVER TOWN..AND EVENTUALLY HE'LL BE BACK HERE!

6

THEN – *SHOWDOWN!* YOU SHOULD FEEL PROUD TO KNOW ME RIGHT NOW, IRISH. I'M ON MY WAY UP – ONE DAY I'LL RUN THE WORLD.

YE'R STRICTLY SMALL-TIME, DUNBAR – AS MY MOTHER WOULD SAY – YE'R SO SMALL YE COULD DANCE UNDER A BED IN A TOP HAT.

SO I HAVE TO CLOSE UP SHOP! IT'S ALL THE FAULT OF THAT MEDDLING PAIR.. THINK THEY KNOW IT ALL.. WELL WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW IS THAT MY MAN FOLLOWED THEM AWAY FROM THE RUBBLE. KNOWING WHERE THEY LIVE GIVES ME THE ADVANTAGE ... AND BOY, AM I GOING TO *TAKE* ADVANTAGE!

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DID YOU EVER SEE AN *AMERICAN* DEALER AT A *BRITISH* CON? YOU WILL AT THE *ELEVENTH COMICART CONVENTION* ON AUGUST 31 — SEPTEMBER 2, 1979!

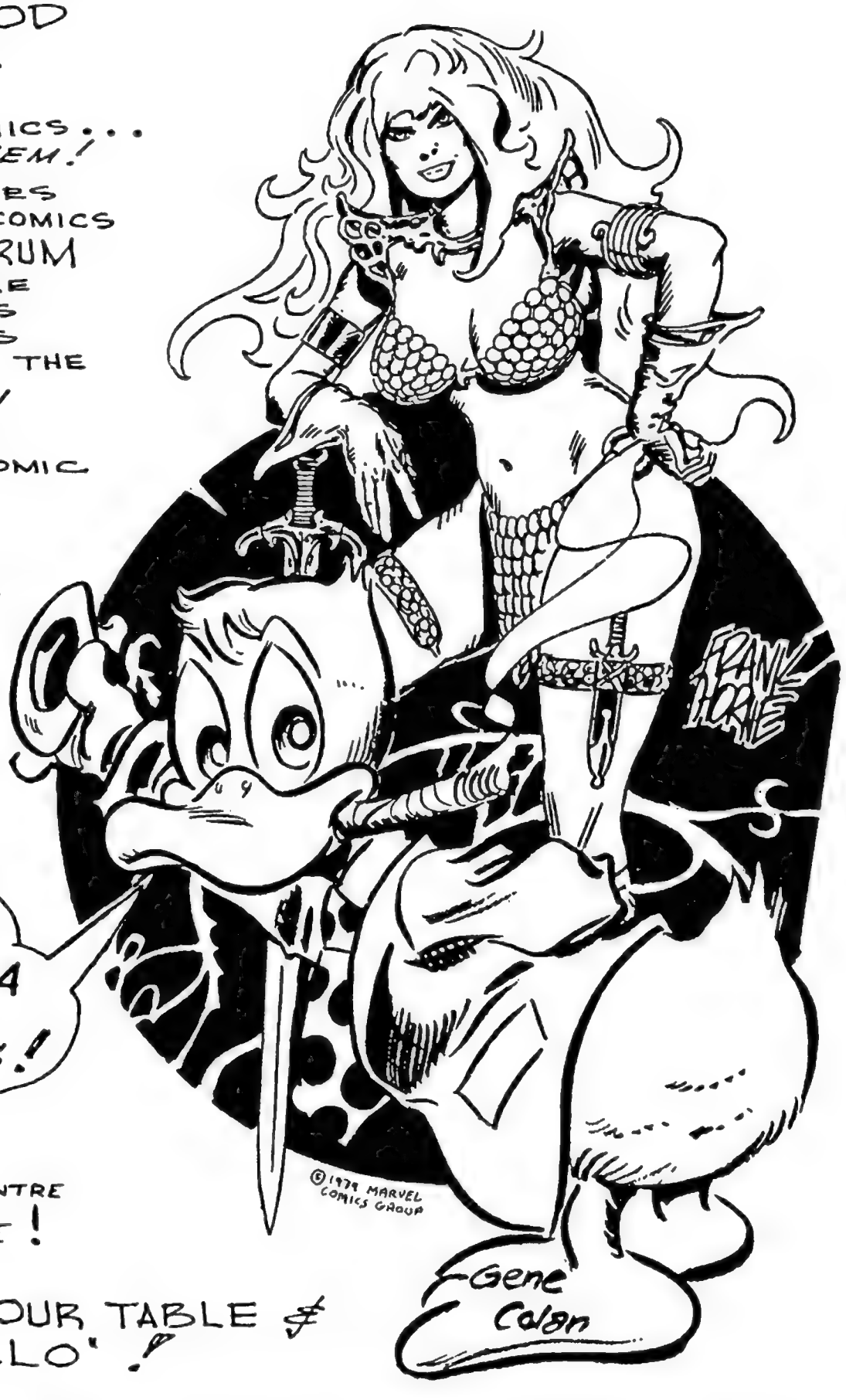
HOWARD LEROY DAVIS AND BIFF CROSSLEY ARE COMING FROM *PHILADELPHIA* LADEN WITH MANY GOOD THINGS . . .

PRE-1960 DC COMICS . . . *LOT'S OF THEM!*

100 COVER STUDIES FOR MARVEL COMICS BY DAVE COCKRUM . . . THESE ARE THE DESIGNS WHICH OTHERS EXECUTE INTO THE FINAL COVER/ORIGINALS!

ORIGINAL ART COMIC PAGES BY AMERICAN ARTISTS!

. . . AND A MYRIAD OF MARVEL COMICS . . . THE SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT DID NOT REACH *ENGLAND* BY REGULAR CHANNELS!



METROPOLE HOTEL
NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE
BIRMINGHAM ~ BE THERE!

STOP BY OUR TABLE & SAY "HELLO"!

HOWARD LEROY DAVIS & BIFF CROSSLEY
38 SIMPSON AVENUE, PITMAN, NEW JERSEY, 08071, U.S.A.

Reaction

Kenny Penman

Thank you, Mr Cruden; let me begin by expressing my non-astonishment at the discontinuation of Dracula, but on to more interesting things. Firstly, I see the imminent end of CMNI has brought about a new glossy cover for Bem — very quick to cash in gentlemen (the cover was excellent; Golden is very good, isn't he.). /(*Well, speaking slantwise, I fail to see any connection between CMNI and Bem's glossy cover, which is simply a symptom of Bem's obvious meteoric rise to splendour.*)/

Reaction raised a couple of issues I would like to say a few things about. Firstly, may I refer to Chris Ash's letter, and direct myself to his comments on 'serious art' — to quote, " 'Serious art' is something which artists create for their fellow artists" — I fear, Mr Ash, that this statement will put you in the minority. Now if Chris Ash is suggesting that serious art (and by art I mean arts — especially in the comic medium, script and graphics should be closely related to one another) is the product of an elite for an elite, then he is not describing 'art' but social pretention. 'Art' which has not reached the public eye cannot be considered as 'serious art', as it has made no attempt to *reach* an audience — to be worthwhile it must convey a message, and not only to those who know where to hear it. Art is the product of the few, but generally for the mass — thus painting may be done by the expert, to be enjoyed by the layman. Comic book 'art' will be done by the expert, to be appreciated by the comic book buyer; not those searching for meanings, but those who catch the *message* of enjoyment. I think you get nearer the truth, Mike (as I have expanded some of your points), but you imply that if the artist and writer did try to impress us with their abilities more comics would be 'serious art' — would this sort of ego trip not merely be another form of preentiousness? /(*Somebody who tries his best is not necessarily on an ego trip, nor engaging in pretention. With reference to comics, every drawing, even when in a series, is not a work of art. Many artists, e.g. George Tuska or Dick Dillin, don't regard it as such — they regard it as a means to an end, the end being to tell a story and thereby earn some money, i.e. their drawing is purely utilitarian, just like a draftsman's plans. So why should the consumer? If the artist does try his best, as did Smith in "Red Nails", or Kirby in the early "New Gods", or most artists in their portfolios, then what is produced is art, the classification of which, be it "good", "bad", or "soulless", is up to the viewer.*)/

Let me go on secondly to Stephen Poppitt's letter, and give a few of my opinions on the comparisons between DC and Marvel in the sixties to what they are now. I think there are two factors which must be taken into account before we can judge the differences; the age of the readers, and 'Quality'. Firstly, it is difficult for the older reader to judge the state of comics objectively, when we read the books of the sixties we were much younger, and therefore we regard them with more esteem as they influenced us at an impressionable age. Older readers will judge the books of the seventies more on their 'quality', comparing them to their distorted ideals of the past, but to the younger (new) readers they may seem like the books of the sixties did to us. I remember Marvel comics (my opinions are almost entirely on Marvel, as DC was so lousy in the early/mid sixties I didn't read them) of the sixties (FF 35 - 70, Thor 100 - 150, etc) as being excellent. They were fresh then, the concepts, although adapted from various mediums, were presented as being totally original, truly exciting — and we were all excited, weren't we? To say that comics today are mere reproductions of what they were in the sixties is not untrue; the genre is limited in the approaches it can work under. The fact that we view them as cliched is because we have read the originals — to new readers the concepts, in their re-presented form, may be just as fresh and exciting. Who is to say who is right about which are better?

Secondly, how do we make quality judgements; we compare artists and authors, etc. Compare the writers of the sixties such as Lee and Thomas to those of today, like Claremont, Michelinie, Mantlo, Englehart, Moench, and McGregor. We notice first of all how business has expanded; writers are now numerous, when once they were few. Each writer should have more time to turn out his work than Lee had, for instance, when he was writing everything — but who is better? Probably there's little difference.

Stan Lee had a great fluent writing style, with humour, characterisation and action all melded, or so we are often told; but along with the good stuff there *was* dross, such as the early Human Torch stories in STRANGE TALES, and even some issues of FF (e.g. 32). What we remember these books for, as I have already stated, is that to us they were 'new', therefore more stimulating than reading the same plot re-written for the seventies. Our own (older readers) feelings taken into account, we cannot deny that the new writers have added much, even if it is merely adaptive evolution. Moench, Englehart, and McGregor have gone down the path opened up by Thomas (who, strangely, has moved away from it), using emotions and complicated characters and plots to produce more 'realistic' stories. Claremont, Michelinie, and Mantlo have become like Lee, Jacks of all trades producing 'easy reading'; adaptions of what has gone before, their 'originality' being little more than the skill of making themes from the past 'original' all over again. Without going into detail (I could, but a letter column's not the place — hint!), I would say the same is true of artists; not that they are better, but that they are merely different, as they have had to adapt to the times. Therefore Kirby, Wood, Colan, were to the sixties what Smith, Wrightson, Golden are today — Adams being both the son, then the father. Perhaps if I was to be a little less objective I would say look at the difference Smith's inks made to Kirby in the Cap America Treasury, but as this *is* an objective letter, I won't.

Also to show the similarities, I consider in each era one man as apart from the rest. In the sixties — Steranko; and in the seventies — Starlin. With these men, the graphics easily interchange with words, no help needed; this is not to say that are faultless, they're not, look at the weird script for SHIELD 1 or the baby Sci Fi of WARLOCK 13 & 14, albeit with pretty pictures. But look at the many times both employ pictures only, without losing the reader. These men are the 'originals', they have taken all their influences and applied their own interests, to create something 'new'; they stick to the rules but alter the final result. That one belongs to the sixties, the other to the seventies I think is a fair indicator of comics generally; as in life, little changes, the good still exists with the bad. The only reasons we regard more as rubbish is that we have seen it before, or merely because when there is so much product there's bound to be more bad stuff amongst it.

I believe that where the FF, THOR, AVENGERS, and ASTONISH were 'great' in the sixties, the new "Marvel Ranaissance", as Bill Mantlo calls it, of X-MEN, MICRONAUTS, AVENGERS, DAREDEVIL, to which I add IRON MAN and DRACULA, will be the 'greats' of the seventies. Incidentally, DC has improved a lot too, or maybe I just missed out before. /(*The mid-sixties DCs you dismissed included a lot of excellent material from Julius Schwartz.*)/

Adam Pirani

! hate to break into the euphoria of all you eager Marvelites out there, but that cornerstone of fandom, THE X-MEN, seems to be much worse than X-worshippers would have us believe.

Basically, the problem is with the declining plot. The cause for this seems to be that the plot has taken a back seat to what is known as "subtle characterization". A rough example is a capture of the X-Men; in issue 111 this is efficiently explained by the captor in 20 or so words; in issue 123 the same type of sequence takes *seven pages* of a seventeen page book, including an apparently unnecessary guest appearance by Spider-Man. This amount of space allows us to read the innermost thoughts and longings of the characters involved, but nowhere in the whole comic is there even a reference as to *why* the X-Men are being captured!

The layout is also going downhill. This is presumably a function of the fact that the script uses a lot of thoughts and words, rather than plots having actions. Only a certain number of words per panel are possible, so more panels with the same people in the same places are necessary; this sort of communication is not visual, and therefore not applicable to the comics medium. The layout on the whole has become more average, and lost the well-thought out-ness of some of the earlier issues.

The whole effect of expanding 3 or 4 pages of plot into a whole comic, to make way for what may be powerful dialogue, is to

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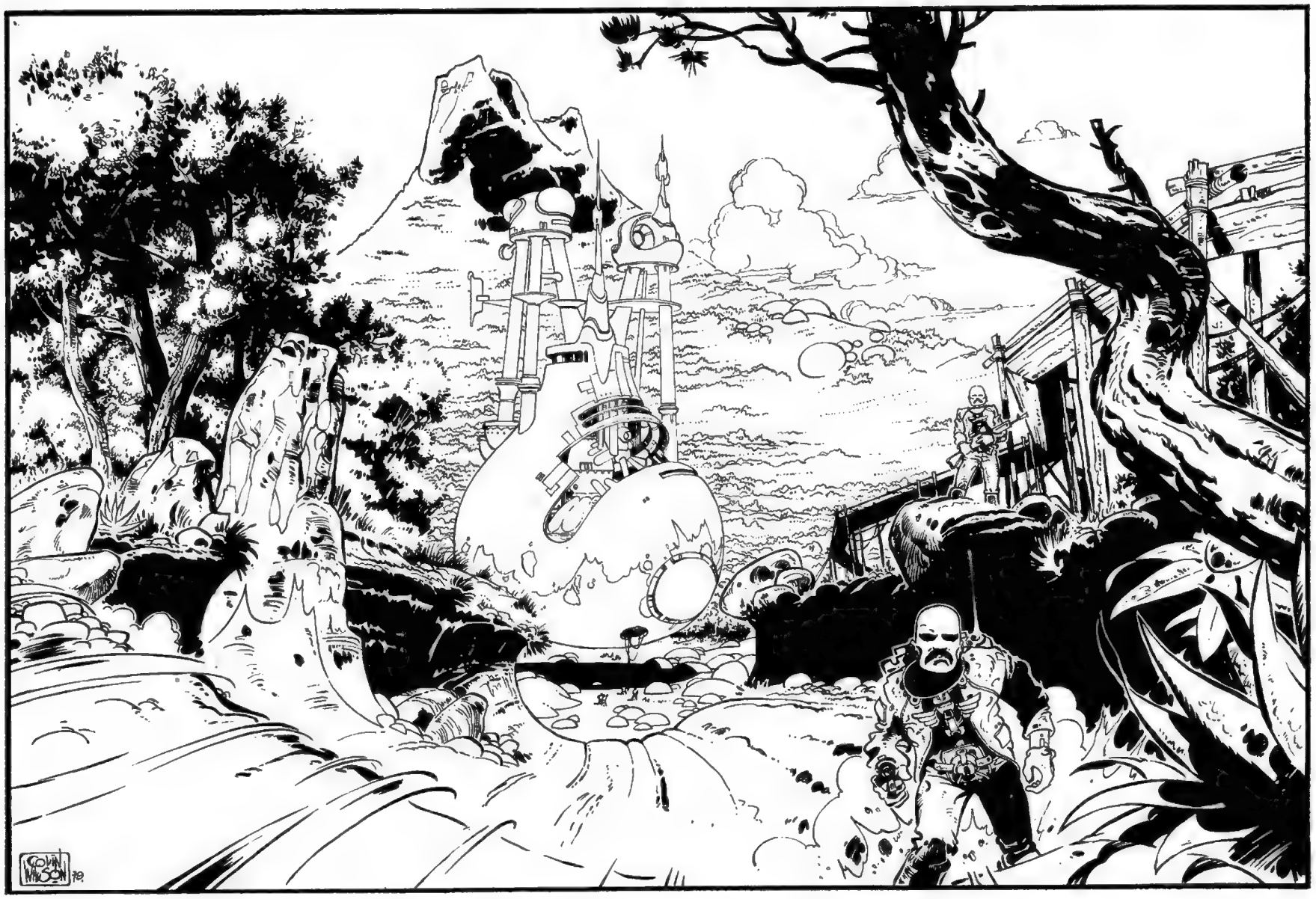
Gez Kelly



reduce the credibility of each individual issue. One issue of X-MEN is no longer single, it can only be read in terms of ten or fifteen issues. The sort of *impact* of such sequences as issues 111-113 is lost now, in pages of cuts back and forth between different characters thinking deep and meaningful thoughts.

The final deterrent is the finished art. Compare the backgrounds of the splash pages of any of issues 111, 112 or 113 to those of 122 or 123. Compare the individual character of any person, or the anatomy or expression, from an issue with Byrne's finished pencils to the more recent issues with only his *breakdowns* and Austin's finishes. Compare any of the Claremont-Byrne-Austin masterpieces to the recent mediocre efforts.

In short, the comic's not bad; it has just fallen from its peak of excellence, to a standard comic done 'the Marvel way'. Of current comics, THE MICRONAUTS seems to have the best plot-to-script ratio; it's also a very *fun* comic.

Chris Ash

I promised myself I wouldn't get drawn into a long-running argument over this, but have succumbed, inevitably, to temptation.

First of all: I did go over the top a little in my last letter, but 'Thrillkill' roused enormous waves of nausea and antipathy within me. It's all very well, Mike, for you to place interpretations upon a story but (again, think of the children you teach) the average Warren reader is more likely going to look at this strip and think, "Hey, the hero of this story is having a great time mowing down all those stuffy looking adults, and those rotten fuzz pigs go and shoot him down!" Remember, this was a story produced for children and adolescents living in a country where A Man's Right to Carry a Gun is considered something of a sacred virtue. /(*If you* really *believe that the average Warren reader is going to think that the hero is having a great time killing people, then I might as well be arguing with that well-known wall.*)/

Had we not been told this boy was logical, sane and affectionate the story might have made sense, but, since I'm sure the vast majority of Bem readers would fit such a description, does that not make us all latent mass-murderers? Your assertion that "pointlessness, stress, materialism, etc" drive normal people to shoot at perfect strangers is even more unacceptable. The point I'm getting at is that nowhere in the story is moral censure directed at the protagonist, only at then-chic names such as Mark Spitz and Richard Nixon, who weren't (according to Adams) even innocent bystanders. /(*More logical, sane and affectionate people are having breakdowns and being committed to institutions than ever before. Their proportion of blame lies in their weakness, or their sensitivity, but a far greater proportion is attributable to the rule-makers of society, who allow such stresses to become a normal feature of life. Yes, I know that people who have breakdowns don't go out and shoot other people, but 'Thrillkill' is a* story, *in which aspects are exaggerated for dramatic effect.*)/

We obviously, incidently, disagree about Neal Adams' attitude towards people, as evidenced by the way he draws them. Since it's not a particularly easy concept to describe, I'll let two examples speak for me. First, I shall borrow a quote from Bob Haney (The Comics Journal 45):

"Neal Adams seems to want to return to some atavistic simple world, and applies a kind of John Wayne University philosophy to everything. Would it were so — then I could stop despising the kind of boobus Americanus he represents, whom most other boobi think really won all the wars, settled all the new lands, quashed all the bad hats — in any case an example of the power of popular myth." /(*You seem to have pulled this "attitude to people from the way he draws them" argument from left-field — or is that what you meant by your "super-butch" reference? Adams drew a wide variety of character types in that very story, from the skinny, bookworm youth, to the aging stout business man, to the John Wayne type cops, who* aren't *the heroes. I cannot possibly see what conclusions you could deduce about Adams' philosophy from that pot-pourl. I certainly acknowledge that he usually draws John Wayne types, mainly because comics are full of John Wayne-type heroes. I also acknowledge that Adams does seem possessed by a "rugged individualist who sets the world to rights" philosophy; sometimes it works, as with Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. sometimes it's embarrassing, as with the Comic Guild/Marvel Contract fiasco. What conclusions would you draw about Haney's philosophy as evidenced by his scripting?*)/.

Secondly, compare 'Thrillkill' with virtually any Harvey Kurtzman war comic. Although considerably more stylized, Kurtzman's patterns of ink on paper are visibly *real* human beings going through hell; not characterless, rather unpleasant looking , advertising stereotypes conveniently getting in the way of all those graphically exciting flying bullets. /(*Surely the first victim, the shopper, was drawn full of character. The youth was quite handsome. Only uglies aren't advertising stereotypes. I hate to admit it, but I haven't got any Kurtzman in my collection, mainly because the East Coast EC reprints didn't get around to presenting any, but I seem to recollect that he has a very cartoony style, akin to Davis, in which case surely the realism would be via the writing rather than the art, and certainly not through character portrayals.*)/

I sincerely hope that takes care of 'Thrill-Kill'. /(*I doubt it.*)/

While I would not suggest that "every reader's imagination is superior to Adams' ", I do believe that virtually anyone's mental conception of realistic, fundamental events is more immediate than a series of black and white drawings. The essence of "A View From Without" could have very effectively been encapsulated in one large drawing of the maimed and bleeding baby sinking into the sewage, with the American bombers flying overhead. To attempt to dress up such an incident as "A Story" is merely insulting the reader's intelligence — and, yes, you can 'read' a drawing. /(*Yes, you can read a drawing, but the more that the drawing simulates real life, i.e. is in a series rather than static, then the more immediate the interpretation is, and the immediacy lends impact. While a person's mental conception of realistic fundamental events is immediate, the events in "View from Without" are hardly fundamental, and in anything non-familiar, I believe pictures are more immediate than words, and a series of pictures is better still, much better than one drawing, large or small. "View from Without" isn't a story; it's an incident from which you draw your own conclusions: does that make it intrinsically inferior, or non-acceptable even, as an example of comics literature?*)/

Allow me to apologize to you for suggesting that you might read all the new DCs and Marvels. I must have been confusing you with someone else.

Since you asked about my views on teachers, I just believe that they are superflous. I do believe in exams however, and that schools should just be like compulsory libraries wherein children could study for themselves. I agree that 99% of children lack the discipline to function effectively in such a situation. I only know it would have worked for me. My distaste for the teaching profession, though, even extended to regarding fellow school-leavers going into it in the same way as an American diplomat might regard a collegue defecting behind the iron curtain. /(*So you believe that the potential of 99% of the population should be allowed to go to waste, simply because a certain system would have suited you better. Rather irrational, I think.*)/

Now I feel it's time I came clean about the first of the two articles I contributed to Bem-23. You see, I turned up at P.G.'s flat with a blank cassette, blithely assuming he recorded all his interviews on a cassette recorder. In my naivete, I failed to realize that they are conducted on a portable reel-to-reel. Fortunately, Gambo did have a clapped-out cassette recorder lying around, but the battery ran out after about five minutes and, consequently, very little of the playback concerned comics. Hence the somewhat cobbled-together salvage job that eventually appeared.

There, who says I can't be self-effacing at times?

Anthony Alexander
West Midlands

Why should Neil Jackson condemn those fans who want to collect American comics with cent prices? Neil and others think that there is no difference between cent and pence comics, when in fact there is one hell of a difference. The cent priced comic is *original*. It is also unavailable in newsagents around the country, and is therefore scarcer. The pence priced comics are in plentiful supply over here. In USA the UK priced versions are ignored — and after all if you lived over there would you want to purchase an "American" comic which had a pence price on the cover? I doubt it. For an American comics collector in America isn't it logical to want to get the genuine article, and not some close facsimile which is basically what the pence priced comic is.

It is I suppose slightly ridiculous that we in the UK are faced with this situation of pence and cents, but there's no denying the value of a cent priced comic. An American dealer can charge say 800 dollars for FANTASTIC FOUR 1, but there's no way that the pence priced FF 1 would go for the same equivalent. I know that if I had a cent FF 1 for sale I wouldn't part with it for the price quoted in Alan Austin's Guide; I'd try to trade it with America because I would get top rates for it.

A cent comic is available via importers over here several months earlier than the UK priced version, which usually comes out in the month it's cover-dated. Priced approximately double, a person who pays the import price has *invested* in it. The Overstreet Guide for the value of American comics thus becomes of some use, and if that person tries to sell that copy he can expect to at least get back what he paid for it. Another thing is that if

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that import happens to fail to get distribution with the UK price its value increase from scarce to rare as the demand becomes great for it. / *(Two points regarding your argument (which sounds more like a sales rap; you wouldn't be a* dealer, *by any chance?) that the printed-for-Britain versions are facsimiles. First, does a slight and trivial alteration to the cover reduce a comic to the status of facsimile, bearing in mind that the British versions are printed at the same time as the U.S. comic, and thus the art, story, colouring etc (i.e. what counts) are* exactly *the same in both editions? Second, even if you want to deal in semantics and call the British versions facsimiles, this doesn't alter the fact that the differences are trivial, and therefore the price differences (for those who are foolish enough to want to pay more) should also be trivial. If you are thinking of presenting a differentiated sales list, I suggest, in the interests of fair-play, that you head the U.S. section "RIP-OFF". Regarding higher prices for imports; if you've paid more for a comic that was being mass-imported into this country, you deserve to lose money on it. If it isn't mass-imported then naturally it increases in value, not because it has 35c on the cover, but because of its scarcity.)* /

However, collectors have a choice, and it's up to them to buy and collect whatever they like, without anyone dictating what they should or shouldn't do. Neil's flippant comment regarding Atlas number ones leads me to assume that he knows very little about the value of comics. I get the impression he is just a reader of comic books, and there are many people who just read comics – to them the price of comic books is only important in that they are obtained as cheaply as possible, and the investment value of the comic is of no importance. Colin Campbell is not the only person who has written about comics being a great investment. Long before he became a dealer, people were collecting as a means of investing, and although comic collecting has a long way to go before it can come close to stamp collecting, to name but one popular investment / hobby, in America at least there is a much greater percentage of people who are comic investors. In the UK comics are slow to become accepted because of the weekly trash that has been prevalent for God knows how many years. Most adults think of comics in terms of "funny books" or "childish". To them the comic book, whatever its size, shape or content is categorized in that one way. The English weekly which contains stories of adventure, sport, war and so on is geared to appeal to the pre-puberty age range, and the expression "comics are childish" aptly describes them. Is it any wonder then that over here American comics aren't even separated from the rubbish, but included in any derogatory comment made about comics. Even the Marvel UK weeklies do nothing to dispel the misconceived attitudes that people hold regarding comics. What some of these people could do with is a dose of 1984, the Warren comic magazine. It is one of the most refreshing comic books to hit the comic racks, and if a person who was of the opinion comics are childish were to read this, there's a good chance he'd change his mind. On second thoughts, I doubt if his opinion would change, as if he had that opinion in the first place it's very likely he can't think for himself, so 1984 would be lost on him as he wouldn't understand it. That's a pity, because issue 3, with the story of how life evolved on this planet, or even what happened to Idi Amin, are so well handled they would be sure to wake up for a few people. / *(Though it has precisely nil amount of effect, I'd like to state that I deplore the 'comics for investment' movement. The serious, bona fide collector can only lose out when comics he desires for their content are priced out of his reach by mercenary philistines who couldn't give a damn whether the comic is by Barry Smith or Don Heck. Also, I can't imagine anything more likely to confirm the comics-are-rubbish viewpoint than 1984. I've never in my life seen such an embarrassing mixture of adolescent sex and humour. Certainly each issue has its gem (Corben plus one or two others) among the crud, but the prevailing atmosphere is smut, pornography to beat your meat by. I've nothing against pornography, but 1984 with its childishness is badly done pornography, and I hate Warren's hypocrisy in trying to pass off his porn mag as something else, namely top grade science fiction.)* /

From humour to serious pieces; I'd like to throw in my 7p worth regarding Neal Adams' "Thrillkill". I found this brilliant. A true portrayal of life, or at least life for someone somewhere. How death can be so senseless and impartial, and how, whether we like it not not, it is very often unexpected. If you haven't realised it yet, we live in a violent society – it's getting worse, and will continue to get worse. Nowadays it's getting so that you can't walk in the street without wondering if you'll reach your destination safely. I can tell you stories of skinheads from the sixties, but they'd be nothing compared with what happens today. Kids are more vicious now, and if you have to put the blame on someone, then it's the fault of a society that is quickly becoming disenchanted with the future. Survival is slowly becoming a problem for more and more people, and while it's not yet reached panic proportions, it is touching more people. Life, whether it's portrayed in films like the excellent "Death Wish" or stories such as "Thrillkill" shouldn't be condemned for any reason. It's no good sweeping the shit under the carpet, and pretending everything is sweet and rosy when it isn't. So, until some radical change occurs in the way things are, escape to your comics, but don't forget; if its fantasy, treat it that way, but if it's like "Thrillkill" accept it, because like I said earlier, we live in a violent society.

This is Walt Attaturk, hitting you with the news from the frontline, as it comes, as it's laid – played care of B.E.M. news and the wonderful world of Dynorama Express Delicatessens.

There's been precious little sleep for these wary soldiers in the past few days. Ever since, in fact, a record-breaking document officially known as BEM number 24, but popularly referred to as "The Pseudo-Slur" hit the news.

On the surface, an innocent reason for Martin Lock to rake in more money, it provoked angry scenes in parliament, as seen in the following exclusive newsreel:
LOCK: " . . . But not only does this save me the effort of typing out each new copy, it also gives the zine a more professional look . . . "
FAN: "Ahh, bury the bullshit, Lock! I can accept that you're lazy, but don't gimme any of that Professional bullshit!"
LOCK: "May I cite the example of Gez Kelly, and the GRAPHIC SENSE, FANTASY TRADER movement . . . "
FAN 2: "Bullshit! Kelly couldn't type anyway. Besides, FT's free . . . "
FAN 1: "I thought we'd be the last fanzine to hit the fifty pence pricetag. People just ain't gonna buy it, Lock!"

But far more serious developments were to occur as events proceeded. Lock was later accused of corruption by Geoff Lamprey, and the results, disregarding today's savage street-fighting, are a lot of awkward questions.

Does a fanzine editor have the right to deceive his readers by writing articles under a pseudonym? Some right-wingers would say yes, arguing that the editor is free to do whatever he feels is necessary to create a package which is both interesting, commercial and adequately reflects the many facets of his character. This reporter would take a different view. The use of pseudonyms can be a corrupting practise. Consider, for instance, a Fan-Things which exclusively plugged items by Martin Lock and Ed Sallis under different names. Consider a Made In Britiain column in which Ruan Lanihorne praised the work or M. Noble, and Brian Bolland, without revealing to the world that he was M. Noble and Brian Bolland. Or consider, even, a fanzine produced by Stan Lee under an alias which sets out to praise unreservedly all Marvel products. Furthermore, there are a number of side issues which this question raises: *Is* Maureen James? And if she isn't, is Doris Telford the quote friend unquote nudge nudge who bought Maureen a copy of *Satan's Tears*, note the symbolism? And while we're on the subject, what exactly provoked the sage Mr. Lamprey's hysterical attack? Had Mr. Lock perhaps slurred the X-Men Fan Club, or did he just want an excuse to call Mr. Lock a fairy? And does anyone who claims to associate with X-Men have any rights to make comments about other people's sexuality?

On the subject of James Van Hise, this reporter can confirm at least one thing; the subject is definitely American. Only a member of the most humourless race in the world could possibly launch into a disection of comedy, and then fail to realise that the whole basis of comedy, whether Chaplin's clumsy viciousness, or Woody Allen's genius, is pain and humiliation on the part of someone other than the viewer. Americans have made an art-form of striving after the joke which hurts or offends nobody, but the joke just isn't funny. Also, only an American could think that Monty Python's stereotypes have no basis in reality.

Meanwhile, the action's hotting up again.

Nigel Balloch has just revealed that his maiden name is Edwards, Mike Cruden has admitted he's Kathleen Glancy, Stan Lee has whipped off his Dez Skinn mask and is shouting, "Nyah, fooled y'all" . . . Shucks, I gotta get in on this . . .

This is Graeme Bassett, favouring the gun to the microphone, and disappearing into the mountains in search of the All-Girl Guerillas. / *(I'm refusing to make any comment on this letter.* – KG) /

Phil Greenaway

Bovine excrement. That's the only way I can sum it up without offending the delicate sensibilities of Bem's female readership. Oh, I'm not referring to Bem, of course; no, I'm referring to CONAN issue 100. I've read a lot of really bad comics in the past, but this issue of CONAN, supposedly a landmark one, was the epitome of bad comics writing. I once considered Roy Thomas to be a decent writer, but these days he churns out stories which your average 8-year-old would turn his nose up at in disdain. I would have excused the cumbersome dialogue *if* Belit's death had been handled sympathetically; but Thomas failed even to deal with that effectively, and the whole item left me cold. And it's not just Thomas who I'm criticising. Other, less experienced writers also fall far short of the heights attained by, say, Lee in his prime. Can't writers produce comics these days where the reader *feels* for the characters concerned? The most recent story which I read which fits in to this category was in BATMAN issue 309. . .the issue where the Blockbuster gets it. Out of all the comics that I read at the time, BATMAN 309 was the most memorable.

Okay, so perhaps it would be asking too much to have moving/stimulating stories produced on a regular basis; but I expect at least to read comics with competent scripts and decent artwork, instead of the badly written, cliche-ridden product which makes up half the comics market these days. At the beginning of this year I bought about 40 comics a month, in one of my sporadic bursts of enthusiasm for the comics industry. . .but I've whittled that figure down to 20 now, and only half of these reach anywhere near artistic competence.

I could see myself in future just concentrating on buying the quality back issues, forgetting about current products – but there's always the possibility that I'll miss out on one of those gems that occasionally appears. And I suppose that, despite all the dross on the market, there's always a minority of at least passable quality around to sustain my interest. Just one thought to add to the above – if I hadn't become involved in fandom, I would have given up reading the majority of comics ages ago. /*(Surely, you're not naive enough to expect everything from the comics medium to be of a high quality. Bear in mind that 94% of everything is crap. Why should comics be an exception, although admittedly the discovery that it isn't is a disappointment.)*/

Which brings me neatly on to my next point. Despite the deterioration in comics standards, it's pleasing to see fanzines constantly improving, as evidenced in Bem-24. It looks as if Bem is all set to enjoy a wider circulation than ever before with the typeset text; and I'm green with envy (sorry).

Now that CMNI has supposedly been discontinued with its 40th issue, perhaps you could persuade Rich to give you the backlog of interviews that he undoubtedly has? In so doing, you can follow up the superb interview in Bem with Bill Mantlo with other similiar features? I was really impressed by Bill's responsiveness to your rather lukewarm questions Martin. . .but did you really cross the Atlantic in order to conduct one solitary interview? The endeavour seems a bit frivolous to me – but I suppose I'm just jealous. One gripe that I had with regards to the interview was your seeming reluctance to question Bill about the new ROM title (which I suppose will never assume a cult following – a title needs a superb artist, like Golden on THE MICRONAUTS, to adopt that sort of status.). I presume that you avoided that line of questioning due to unsettled legalities? /*(You mean you believed I crossed to America in Captain Frog's* Frogjet, *Phil? If so, I've got this quaint little three card trick I'd like to show you, at the Comicon. . . Actually, the interview was conducted by post, and there wasn't really any time to get more details of ROM into the text of the interview – however, I hope the visual preview material Bill supplied just in time to be fitted into Bem gave you a bit of detail about the character.* –ML)/

It's a pity that 'Unamerican Activities' is to be discontinued; but I think that it's a wise move, as I can't honestly see anything left for Ruan to cover, and the extra space to be devoted to reviews is welcomed. I'd agree with Ruan's list of favourites, most probably – but unfortunately I don't get as many British publications as he does, and I avoid the British war titles altogether. Judge Dredd is certainly my favourite character, but putting Dan Dare into fifth place is questionable; Ruan isn't a pal of Dave Gibbons, is he? I must confess that I'm not *that* enthusiastic about DD; I consider it only marginally better than 'Invasion' et al from the past. But it's all right if you like that sort of thing, I suppose.

As for UltraMan. . .um. . .Mike. . .HELP!!! What does it mean? It didn't have something to do with wasted ideals, did it? /*(You're absolutely right; it didn't.)*/

Actually, I've gotten a whole lot more interested in the strip since my last letter as I have great fun reading all sorts of inaccurate symbolism into it. In fact, I've gotten a whole lot more interested in the fan comic strips medium in general, especially since I don't find the professional comics medium entirely satisfactory. Graphixus and Near Myths are/have been available; and strip zines like Elipse and WKSH are also on sale. I must admit that they can be as bad as the professional comics that I've criticised; the only difference being that they hold tremendous potential since they are unhindered by editorial policy, and it is this sort of potential which is lying around, just waiting to be realised. Since a large number of the strip zines that I've read seem to have equally bad stories when compared proportionately to the pro publication, then I suppose that Sturgeon's pretentious Law *is* true after all.

Going on to my favourite part of Bem, I see that there is a nice conflict a-brewing between you, Mike, and Chris Ash. I tend to side with you in this instance. Admittedly, the type of mentality that can absorb so many junk comics every month is suspect; but I don't feel that we're all quite as illiterate as Chris would have us believe. I usually read a comic to pass the time. I certainly don't read them in order to fulfil some hellbent desire to rot my brain cells. They are a viable compromise between reading a book (when you haven't the time), and watching one of the all too few good programmes on TV. I don't want to get too involved in the specifics of your respective arguments; but I will say that I consider "A View From Without" one of the finest pieces of comics *literature* that it has ever been my pleasure to read – and I don't think I'm some sort of sick, perverted comic book freak for admitting it.

Geoff Lamprey/G.F. Willmetts brought one of the shadier aspects of fandom to light by bringing up the topic of the various pen names used by fans. It's all very well naming names – but hasn't he got any scruples about betraying the confidence of his correspondents? Actually, I heard about the Alan Wright/Emlock pen name biz long before I received Bem – any ideas on how the rumours might have started, Martin? / *(Not a one, "Phil"; as far as I can remember, I've only put an Emlock pen-name into Reaction, back in Bem-11 for, as they say, humorous effect (it's the one that starts* "Dear George And Gray", *if you're interested), and most people were sure it was Nige Edwards fooling about . . .* – ML)/

The final topic that I've got to discuss this time is the Comicon that's to be held in Birmingham this year. Now, a lot of people have got this notion that it's going to be much more formal than previous events, and that the fannish atmosphere will be lost. RUBBISH. I went to last year's Comicon, and enjoyed myself immensely. All the people that I met were very friendly, sociable individuals – fans and pro alike. I'm going to the Brum Con this year, full expecting the same sort of reception, as I should imagine that most of the same people will be attending. And if the same people attend, then the same atmosphere should prevail, regardless of the more lavish surroundings, or whatever. It will almost certainly be better organised; but it strikes me that it's not the panels/guests which soley contribute to the success of a Comicon. More than likely, it is the actual people who attend; and so long as all concerned haven't changed too drastically over the past year, I'm looking forward to a really enjoyable, fun event at the end of August.

Late addendum: The Eagle Awards were more realistic this year, and I've got a pretty good idea of who and what I'm going to vote for. My only difficulty comes when I've got to put down my nomination in the Roll of Honour section. Undoubtedly, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, as well as their creation, Superman, most deserve the award as they've probably been the most important single factor to have influenced the shape of the comics industry today. But I feel that Brian Lewis also deserves some sort of recognition. I was deeply saddened to learn of his untimely death; and, inadequate as an award may be when you consider his vast contribution to the comics industry, as well as his friendliness to everyone who bothered to talk to him at marts and conventions. I still believe that an award of some sort is justified – necessary, even.

And, finally: did anyone else see the piece on Neal Adams in The Guardian newspaper? / *(Yes, and a very interesting report it was too, concerning Neal's battle on behalf of Jerry and Joe, and it contained a plug for Neal's book-signing at Forbidden Planet. The most refreshing aspect of the article was that it was written as a* straight *piece of journalism.)* /

Alan Early I just received the twenty-fourth issue of my favourite fanzine. As I'm a keen MICRONAUTS fan, I liked the cover and the Bill Mantlo interview with all the additional drawings as well--I look forward to reading the ROM mag. I prefer to see splash pages and panels from comics rather than cover repros, because the covers are generally misleading (e.g. JONAH HEX No. 26, and they're not usually by the regular artist's.

CE3K In Retrospect was a non-event, and I disagree with Nige Edwards' review of MACHINE MAN No. 10. I loved this mag. Maybe the story was a bit poor, but the art by Ditko was fantastic. What's wrong with "an old Hulk comic from the early sixties"? These were the stuff that made comics as they are today. As stated in Jan Garczynski's review of the Hulk pocketbook in Bem-23, most of today's writers have forgotten that the main aim of comics is to *entertain*. This comic entertained me. This Edwards creep seems such a sarcastic git that if he doesn't like Ditko's work and sixties style comics he doesn't have to read them. I didn't think comics like this could be made anymore. Roll on Ditko. *//(Roll what on Ditko? but do you think the sixties Stan Lee-scripted Marvels are as entertaining as today's fan-favoured comics, scripted by such as Michelinie, Claremont or McKenzie? And I mean entertaining to the comic fan, not the casual 12-year-old buyer.)//*

And now on to the Superman film. This is very entertaining--and disappointing. It doesn't give satisfactory explanations, and I completely agree with Gordon Smith's views on Superman reversing time. When he reversed time and then stood outside Lois's car talking to her she described the gas station blowing up, and telegraph poles falling down, so presumably Superman had not stopped earthquake itself; why then did the crack in the road not appear? I fully expected Supes to whisk Lois away as the car was swallowed by the earth subsidence once more.

I will go and see Superman 2, but only out of interest.

Michael O'Donoghue This is the first time I have written to any mag; I was prompted to do so by Stephen Poppitt's letter. Being a timid/closet type it's taken time to work up the courage to write, being afraid of some heavyweight LoCcer knocking me. *//(Nobody will knock you, though several may disagree with you. Surely you ego is sturdy enough to take a little disagreement?)//*

I agree with Stephen that the letter columns of Bem, and of the few other fanzines I have bought, are heavy. All of them referred to people and characters unknown to anyone just emerging from the mainstream of (DC/Marvel) comics; I'm not saying that the letters should be downgraded, yet all of them were so far above my head (and still are, sometimes) that I was afraid to write, as anything I would say would look too naive, or plain stupid. *//(Don't you think it's fair enough that you spend some time amassing a body of knowledge, via comics and fanzines, before actively participating in fandom. Basically, and I hope this doesn't sound snobbish, fandom is for the serious collector who has been around for a few years, and for the education of those "just emerging from the mainstream of comics".)//*

Like Stephen I entered the fan area of comics through chance, by picking up a fanzine in Dark They Were, where I'd gone after reading an ad for it in British Marvel in '77. Now, I don't remember British Marvel being swamped by active fan encouragement from existing fanzines--but I don't think anyone should be wholly blamed for that, because I could have taken part in the British letter pages. The Bullpen themselves weren't all that informative about fan activities, either. Anyway, I rambled through the mainline comics, until I dropped British Marvel in disgust at its new format. Now I mainly collect Star Reach and the current mainlaine yank goodies (X-Men et al), which are about all I can afford. *//(I wonder if Dez will give fandom some publicity, now he's in a position to do so. A fanzine review every so often wouldn't be too space-consuming, surely.)//*

Anyway, what about Bem-24. Interesting! The Kathleen Glancy letter and Katholicity column were very good, although I wouldn't agree with the issue raised in her letter and Bem-23's Katholicity. Moondragon was correct in 'raping' Pietro's mind by removing his unjustified bigotry. Pietro's hatred of the Vision was like a cancer, it has been growing from the earliest Vision stories, and threatened to destroy his reasoning totally. So, as with a physical cancer, the cancerous cells were removed. Would you call the removal by a surgeon of a cancerous part of a body a "rape" of that body? *//(Sorry, but I don't agree with your analogy (I warned you someone might disagree with you!). Cancer is a matter of life or death; bigotry isn't. I think Moondragon should have taken the time to educate Quicksilver, to prove by reasoning that the Vision is of equal status to any human. Quicksilver's intelligence, demonstrated in many adventures, is surely sufficient to cope with such reasoning. Mind-tampering just isn't kosher, unless it is a matter of life and death, i.e. in the case of homicidal murderers.)//*

Before joining the X-Men what was the Wolverine? He was a soldier, albeit a special one; a soldier of the Canadian government. Being a soldier he kills as a matter of course. This is not because of his homicidal tendencies. Kathleen's letters and columns were well written, when funny they were hilarious, when serious they were thought-provoking.

The comments raised in the homosexuality debate seemed totally unrelated to comics, except in the treatment of stereotypes in comics. Unfortunately this is purely a matter for the powers that be, be they Lee, Khan, or somebody else in that realm with influence over subject matter. The stereotype of the super knocker appears to be an artistic problem. Super women need super knockers, like super men need super muscles (any other sign of increased male virility would be banned by the comics code). The artistic traits of physique exaggeration are suffered by men, too; Kirby draws solid men with firm square jaws and bulging biceps, and women with 40-25-40 figures. Byrne draws overly large breasts, and places men's muscles at angles only a contortionist could manage.

Having mainly read Marvel's comics, I cannot really make any valid comments on the differences between the sixties and seventies. Marvel have changed from the sixties, however, for better *and* for worse. Lee did a one man job in revitalising comics in the sixties by introducing many original characters, and then working them to their fullest--yet by the late sixties his work was becoming repetitive, and ever since he left writing, his books have stagnated. This has happened due to an inability to surpass Lee's tried and trusted formula, for fear of poor sales (with the possible exceptions of Hulk & Doc Strange). The problem was it was *Lee's* formula, and since he left them, the FF, Thor, and Spider-Man have all regressed if anything. The seventies, however, saw 'The Marvel Revolution Phase 2', with Killraven, Deathlok, McGregor's Panther, MoKF, and more recently the X-Men, Avengers, and the black & white line. For Marvel the sixties saw a revitalisation of comics; the seventies saw many new writers realising the full potential of comics.

John Murphy For several issues now, I've heard many opinions from different people on the killing of a guard by Wolverine. My own view is that it was not necessary, but has anyone asked themselves why those who were concerned with that issue had Wolverine do this? Is it possible that interest in Wolverine was starting to drop, so the production team had Wolverine kill someone to boost reader interest in the character? After all, it's not every day that a superhero murders in cold blood for no satisfying reason (since Nightcrawler could have done the job just as well by rendering him unconscious). This issue was handled well, though, and the mere fact that they did not capitalise on this novelty on the front cover may suggest something else. It makes a change from "So-and-so murders in cold blood!" stamped on the cover, which turns out to have a completely different meaning. *//(No, I don't think interest in the most interesting X-Man was starting to flag. I see that scene more as character development and revelation.)//*

As for Marvel, they recently seem to be exploiting women, a development which I'm not so sure I like. For instance, they're giving Ms Marvel, Valkyrie, and the Wasp costumes that are impractical, except maybe in a Miss World contest.

I'd finally like to say that selling comics distributed over here for as much as TEN times more if they're cents-priced is utterly abhorrent: Star Wars No. 2 at £1.50 or 15p! If Paul Burton could do it two years back for only 3p extra a copy for cents issues, why can't Colin Campbell?

EAGLE AWARDS--THE BEM READERS' VERDICT

I had less completed ballots returned to me this year than last, due in part to a lot of Bem readers sending back forms to Fantasy Trader, and also perhaps to the fact that the absence of previously nominated candidates makes the form more difficult to complete. However, there are still enough to make a analysis of the figures worthwhile; I must stress that these are *not* the official, full results, which will be announced at Comicon '79 and printed in Bem next time.

Favourite Comic Book Artist

JOHN BYRNE	31.3%
Marshall Rogers	15.6%
Gene Colan & George Perez	9.4%
Mike Golden	6.3%
pass. . .3.1%	

Favourite Comic Book Writer

CHRIS CLAREMONT	18.8%
Marv Wolfman	12.5%
Steve Englehart & Doug Moench	9.4%
Jim Shooter & Roy Thomas & Dave Kraft & Bill Mantlo & Steve Gerber & Roger Mckenzie	6.3%
pass. . .6.3%	

Favourite Comic Book Inker

TERRY AUSTIN	31.3%
Tom Palmer	12.5%
Klaus Janson & Dick Giordano	9.4%
Bob Mcleod & Josef Rubinstein & Pablo Marcos	6.3%
pass. . .3.1%	

Favourite Comic Book Character

BATMAN	18.8%
Wolverine	15.6%
Dracula	9.4%
Howard the Duck & Starlord & Jonah Hex	6.3%
pass. . .3.1%	

Favourite Comic Book Group or Team

X-MEN	46.9%
Avengers	15.6%
Defenders	9.4%
Micronauts & Justice League	6.3%
pass. . .6.3%	

Favourite Comic Book Villain

MAGNETO	15.6%
Dr Doom	12.5%
Korvac/Michael & Dracula & The Joker	9.4%
pass. . .9.4%	

Favourite Supporting Character

JACK OF HEARTS	9.4%
Cyclops & Bev Switzler & Hawkeye & Vision	6.3%
pass. . .15.6%	

Character Most Worthy of Own Feature

KILLRAVEN	12.5%
Starlord	9.4%
Adam Warlock & Silver Surfer & Deathlok	6.3%
pass. . .3.1%	

Favourite Colour Dramatic Comic Book

X-MEN	31.3%
Tomb of Dracula	12.5%
Jonah Hex	9.4%
Avengers	6.3%
pass. . .0%	

Favourite Comic Magazine

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN	34.4%
Marvel Preview	25.0%
Heavy Metal	15.6%
pass. . .18.8%	

Favourite Single Comic Book Story

SUPERMAN VS. MUHAMMAD ALI & "THE LAST BOUNTY HUNTER"	9.4%
Avengers 177 & Hulk Annual 7 & Howard the Duck 24	6.3%
pass. . .15.6%	

Favourite Continued Story

AVENGERS 167-177	25.0%
Detective 475-476	18.8%
Thor 273-278	6.3%
pass. . .28.1%	

Favourite New Comic Title

MICRONAUTS	40.6%
Spider-Woman	6.3%
pass. . .37.5%	

Favourite Comic Book Cover

AVENGERS 174	9.4%
pass. . .28.1%	

Favourite British Pro Comic

2000 A.D.	31.3%
Starlord	12.5%
Starburst	9.4%
pass. . .28.1%	

Favourite British Fan Publication

BEM	71.9%
Comic Media News	9.4%
pass. . .6.3%	

Favourite British Comics Artist

BRIAN BOLLAND	21.9%
John Bolton	18.8%
Ian Gibson	9.4%
pass. . .25%	

Favourite British Comics Writer

JOHN WAGNER	18.8%
T.B. Grover	12.5%
Alan Hebdon	6.3%
pass. . .43.8%	

Favourite British Comics Character

JUDGE DREDD	31.3%
Thundermole	9.4%
Robo-Hunter & Ro-Jaws	6.3%
pass. . .34.4%	

Roll of Honour

WILL EISNER	15.6%
Siegel & Shuster & Jack Kirby	12.5%
Neal Adams & 2000 A. D. & Superman	6.3%

And that was the lot; the average age of the Bem voters was 22 years, 7 months, and the average number of "pass" votes was 3.3. The highest number of passes I encountered was eleven, which led me to wonder if the effort had been worth the 7p stamp involved; particularly as the "character most worthy of own feature" on that form was Captain America!

Now, these results should give some indication of the over-all winners, with the notable exception of the "favourite fanzine" category. It's very nice to get such a high level of support for Bem from Bem readers, but the bias will be quite different on forms sent in via other fanzines, I'm sure. Gez Kelly for example had on the forms he collected very nearly an overall majority for GRAPHIC SENSE, with Bem running a strong second ahead of CMNI-- while I didn't get a single vote for GS, and only one for FANTASY TRADER. It's the second year running that Bem readers have nominated Will Eisner for the Hall of Fame; last year the overall vote gave that honour to Steve Englehart. Even more than last year, there's a strong "team vote" effect, with six categories going to various aspects of the X-Men; Tomb of Dracula had some loyal fans voting for it across a number of categories too, as did Englehart's last Batman work. There isn't room, unfortunately, to list the many people and characters who only got one vote in a category; in the "favourite comic book cover", there were twenty covers with only a vote each, and for a long time a 20-way tie seemed the likely result!

It will be interesting to compare the Bem figures with the full, official results; I just hope that next year the voting forms will come out in January, as trying to remember eighteen months back, and discounting half a year's worth of recent material, can make voting a rather complicated business!

M.L.

KATHOLICITY

BY KATHLEEN GLANCY

And now WHOOOOSH, the magazine for superbeings, brings you once again our resident physician, kindly old Dr. Bones, to answer your questions and talk to you about health. (Dr. Bones doesn't regret at all that he is unable to enter into private correspondence with readers — God knows what gets printed is weird enough to boggle his mind . . .)

Hello again, you gaudily garbed neurotics. Before we get to my vitally important message in this week's "Dr. Bones' Bulletin" — some more of your puerile whines.

M of the Great Refuge writes: I know this may seem trivial, but lately I've had the most terrible dandruff. As you will see from the enclosed photo, for me this is a serious problem. Can you help? PS: The fellow standing on my left is my brother-in-law, unfortunately. He says do you happen to know how he could get his hair to lie down?

Well, normally I'd say "I'm a doctor, not a hairdresser". but dandruff is a very serious problem for you, M. Try Head And Shoulders, or in your case Head, Shoulders, Elbows, Wrists, Fingers, Waist, Knees, Ankles, and Toes. As for your weirdo brother-in-law, has he tried a crew-cut?

LL or Metropolis writes: I have a boyfriend who can fly, and often he picks me up and carries me through the sky. But there's something that I don't like to tell him, only I fear one day I'm not going to be able to hold it down till I'm alone. Please, Doctor, is there any real way of stopping airsickness?

God, what silly complaints so far. I've always found a good belt of whisky works wonders. You'll have to decide for yourself whether old red-and-blue would prefer you stinking of booze, or else throwing up on his yellow S.

WWIII of no fixed abode writes: I have a best friend who causes me problems. He frequently turns into ice, whereupon the temperature round him drops to zero. I keep getting colds, I had fifteen in two months — and the months were July and August. How can I stop getting colds?

Try thermal underwear. And a good belt of whisky wouldn't hurt. Or how about finding a new best friend?

DDL of Star City writes: I have a bad case of laryngitis, which makes it impossible to use my ultrasonic power and cuts my crimefighting efficiency in half, which annoys me. Also I infected my boyfriend, and while he hasn't any ultrasonic power he is very fond of the sound of his own voice and his temper, never of the best, has been vile. What's a quick cure for laryngitis?

You and he should go to bed (*Beds*, you silly old fool! You want the CCA to accuse WHOOOOSH of advocating immorality? — Ed) and each have a good belt of whisky. This may not cure your laryngitis, but you will feel a lot happier about it.

N of Atlantis writes: Strange white patches which seem to be some sort of fungus have appeared round my gills, and all I want to do is float on my back; I've no energy left. What's wrong with me?

I was at a loss here, till I mentioned it to a vet I know. He said you should be put in a mild solution of manganese for 3 minutes twice daily, and care must be taken that your bowl is clean, and your water changed regularly. I pass this on for whatever good it is. Personally, I suggest a good belt of whisky.

RG of Hudson U writes: Doctor, you've got to help me. Perfect health all my life, and now, when I'm doing my damnedest to impress an older woman, *now* I get acne!

Calm yourself, boy. Patience. You're a late developer, look how long it took you to get through high school. The acne will pass in time, you lead a good healthy life. In the meantime, go have a good belt of — (Shut up, you alcoholic idiot! I'm not sure he's old enough to drink yet! — Ed).

The Dread D of the Dark Dimension writes: My head is on fire. What should I do?

I dunno, D. Obviously you've already had a good belt of whisky.

The JLA of 22,300 miles above the Earth write: We are suffering from one of our periodic bouts of conscience about the Dharlu, a pregnant alien we keep in suspended animation in our computer. Can you tell us if this will affect her unborn offspring?

What in God's name possessed you to put a pregnant alien in your computer? Let her out at once, you sadists, and give her a good belt of — (*Enough* about belts of whisky, you aged sot! —Ed).

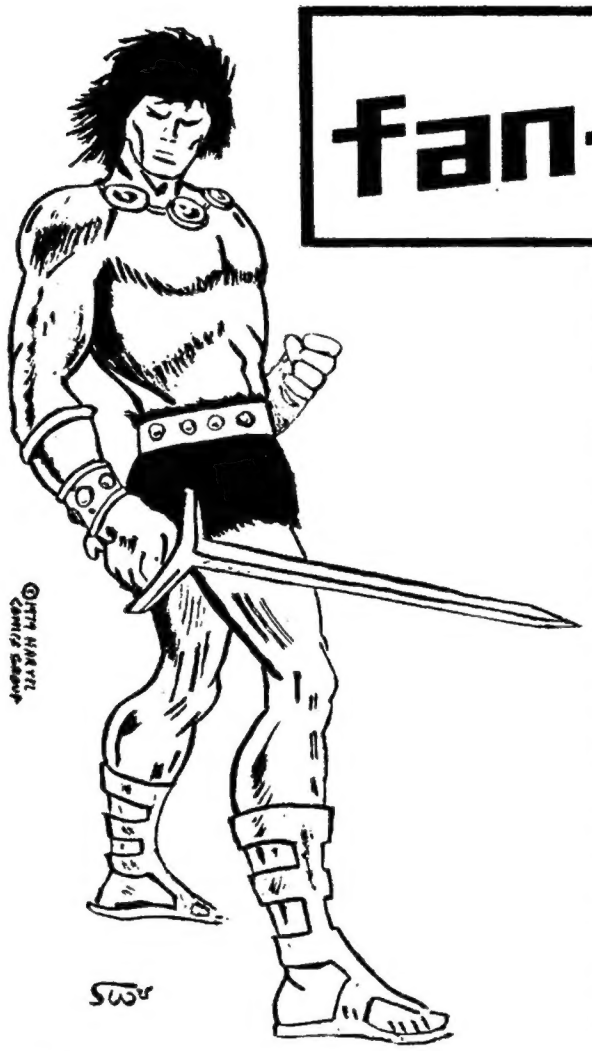
CK of Metropolis writes. I am immensely strong. However, I am not *quite* as strong as some people think. So as not to disillusion them I pretend it's all easy, but the fact is I do have to strain sometimes. And, well, the last time I moved the world, well, I didn't brace myself right, and, well, what I'm trying to get round to is, Doctor — do you know a make of truss that will be invisible under a skin-tight suit?

Boy, *you've* got a problem. I mean, I could prescribe you a truss but, well, if no earthly bonds can hold you, I —, well, I'm not sure whether it would, well (God, he's got me doing it too), work right. You'd best pop into Kandor and see what they can do for you.

And now, at last, Dr. Bones' Bulletin. Today I want to talk to you about addiction — and in particular about the addiction that is affecting nearly every one of *you*. You know very well what I mean. They are irresistable to superbeings, the damned little things. And they're not harmless, like a good belt of whisky is, oh no! You know how addicts end up — bloated, unable to move. Already it's affecting you, and the only reason crime hasn't run rampant is that it affects the villains too. Soon everyone will just be lying about gorged. And then *they'll* take over! They control the Cosmic Cube, you know. Before it's too late, stop! Throw away the Twinkies! Cast off the chain of the cup-cakes! Shun the terrible Fruit Pies. They'll take over, I tell you — it's a conspiracy, the whole world, several whole worlds, all gobbling, all guzzling —

(Kindly old Dr. Bones will return to these pages as soon as the Sunshine Home for the Afflicted with Delirium Tremens dry him out. What nonsense the poor old fellow was babbling at the end. And now, if you'll excuse me I'll get back to the delicious, rich moist cake, the luscious creamy filling, the —— —Ed)

fan-things
BY ED SALLIS



This may well be a shorter column than usual, as the shift to this snazzy new type-setting has brought the deadline forward, and anyway most fanzines are aiming like this Bem for an August release, so they're not yet available for review. VERTIGO No. 6 has just made it in time, though, with 28 big A4 pages for 20p post free from Barry K. Winetrobe (Vertigo),

and it's pretty good--like earlier issues, only bigger and better, making a 4-issue subscription at 75p look quite a good investment. Unfortunately, the wrap-around cover ran into legal problems (the back cover ad featured some Peanuts characters; United Features Syndicate are pretty hot on misuse of their characters, and the printer felt he, along with the editors, might get sued), but the Meirion Jones front cover is striking enough on its own. Inside is an appreciation of John Bolton by Phil Greenaway, mainly talking about his House of Hammer work and "The Bionic Woman" in Look-In (how about those lovely covers he did for Alan Austin, especially the Fantasy Unlimited Annual, and all the men's mag work, Phil?), an article on Dinosaurs, reviews, "Battlestar Exploitica", positive propaganda in comics by Brian West, letters, Paul Jay at his funniest, and the usual bits. The stencil printing is always legible, and while the absence of interior illustrations, except for the two-page Battlestar strip by Geoff Lindsey, makes the layouts boring, I approve of the new size, and urge Barry (and co-editor Geoff) to stay with A4--it displays better in shops and at marts, more prosaically it *stacks* better, and it sells better! Most editors of A5 zines succumb sooner or later to the urge for bigness--and it's no bad thing, take it from me.

Also A4 and stencilled, apart from Paul Jay's best front cover yet, is COMICS UNLIMITED 50, with 42 pages for 35p from Alan Austin.

I don't want to divulge the Shock Ending, but it's wonderful to have CU back, especially with an issue of this quality. There's *"Baragrin"* again, and, as befits this milestone (which almost became a millstone) issue "The Fanzines of Alan Austin" by the returning Allan J. Palmer, with interjections by Alan A.; "The Consumer's Guide to D.C. Comics, Part 1" by Alan Brightmore, a fine guide to the various series and titles DC has been publishing of late, an opinion piece on the cents/pence pricing split by CU's editor, fiction, Nick Neocleous art, a rude one-page strip by Jeff Brewer featuring the Scarlet Witch's best costume yet, and ten pages of letters--plus of course the famed Fantasy Unlimited list of comics for sale. I suppose any fan-ed could put together a good issue if he took this long, but if Alan can get back on a regular schedule with issues this good, I'll be one happy fanzine reviewer!

And talking of happy little me leads, relatively naturally, to the other fanzine besides Bem with the good sense to run an Ed Sallis column; FANTASY TRADER. Issue 39 will be out by the time you read this (with 16 or 20 A5 pages, or maybe more, from lots of places, or at £1 for 12 issues from Gez Kelly,), and besides a fairly short "Fanhunter" column (did you know my original column, for Rob Barrow's COMIC FANDOM BULLETIN, was called "The All-New Fanhunter"? That was before I became rich and famous and moved to BEM. . .), the last I heard Gez was hoping to have room for a three-page superhero adventure written by Ruan "One has to move on" Lanihorne, and illustrated by Have-at-'em Harry McAvinchey, which Martin had been planning for FT 34 before the zine changed hands and added an extra zero to the right-hand end of its circulation figure. It's a nice pastiche of/tribute to E-Man, of fond memory; and of course there'll be lots of comics for sale, ads for GRAPHIC SENSE, maybe another letters page, and Paul Jay's "Boggo" strip.

In the interests of fair play, let me next mention NEW AEON 2, FT's new competition in the high-circulation adzine stakes 20 A5 pages for 12p from Paul Schofield,

interestingly, it's printed and edited by the man who used to print FT in Mike Cruden's and Martin Lock's time -- I guess that putting out such a zine gets into the blood! The fact that Paul is his own printer, and the absence of text features except for a short editorial, means advertising is cheaper here than in FT -- but let's hope the two mags can co-exist satisfactorily. One of the ads is rather intriguing, and in fact I don't know if it's a joke or not; it announces "Comicon '80" next year taking place on the QE2 liner on a cruise from Southampton to New York, with tickets at £450.00 for the round trip, inclusive. If this *is* a serious ad, I wonder how many fans can afford that? One thing's for sure, Gez Kelly will have to pay my expenses if he wants a convention report for FT from me!

My copy of the above came free with ARGENT VOID PRESS No. 2 (28p for 24 A5 pages from John Foster, 1 Southwood Gate, Leeds LS14 5AN), which is, thankfully, rather less outrageous than the first issue, about which I commented ever-so-briefly last time. And for that improvement, John has his readers to thank--they've told him what they liked and what they didn't like, John has taken their advice, and here's suddenly a good, worthwhile fanzine with its own voice and style. Well done, everyone! "A Much Neglected Face" is about comic covers--as it promises to also analyse fanzine covers, I hope our own dear editor pays attention! Anyway, "Face" is a good study of a much neglected subject, by Howie J. Hampton (hmm--sounds like a pseudonym. But then, who am I to talk?); the lettercol is one of the most sensible I've ever read; "A View By Elliott" is a very well-done piece of coverage of the fan/zine scene from an artist's point of view; and there's other good stuff too. By the way, if you're reading this *before* the main Comicon, hold off on sending away for fanzines--Colin Campbell has generously provided a table for the sale of fanzines just outside the dealer room, so you'll be able to buy just about every current zine there and save postage--either your money, when postage is extra, or the editor's, where postage is included. Er . . . you *are* coming, I trust. . .?

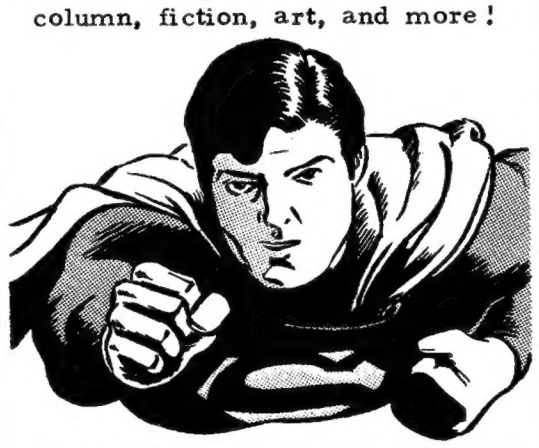
While as I write the long-awaited first slick type-set issue of GRAPHIC SENSE hasn't turned up (maybe by the end of the col?), Colin Gould has sent through a copy of OGRE 3, its "add-on" bonus. Little did Martin and Mike know what they were doing when they started this bonus-zine lark by sending FT out with Bem! Anyway, if you don't subscribe to Gez's Sensation, Oggy costs 15p by post from Colin,

for 20 A5 pages, all a very pretty pale pink colour, for those of us who have other uses for fanzines after reading them--I wish the paper was softer, though! Just a small jest there, folks--no aspersion on the quality of this fanzine, which is progressing very well. Colin isn't afraid to use some nice full-page bits of art--after all, when most of the print run is

now out!

Tecgwd

"The East Clandon Great Whaling Disaster" issue 5 includes "The Superman Enigma", Chris Reeve Interview, news, gossip, reviews, fandom comparisons, a big letter column, fiction, art, and more!



Issue 5:20p, Issue 4:15p plus P&P

given away free, you can afford to indulge yourself, I suppose. Avram Buchanan's Wolverine cover is excellent, as is his full-pager on page 10; his brother Nick contributes a lovely two-page tribute to Vaughn Bodé's "The Man" strip, Bob Watkins has excelled himself with the back cover artwork. Alex Evans draws an intriguing Red Sonja, and Luke Rainford not only gives us some of his typically well-crafted artwork, he takes over the Dick Domar "Deadfan" series of tales, and sure-fingeredly makes it his own! If I can find any fault, it is that some of the text pieces are a bit short, giving a "bitty" read. "Who'll Win The Eagles?" is okay, but would have been better appearing a few months *before* the voting deadline, and I can forgive a fanzine review section called "Behind the Zines" much WEIRD FANTASY ADVERTISER still going, I see, and reached issue 69? I wonder what it looks like, hint-hint--you can find out by sending 25p plus "postage" to Frank Dobson,

and "Ogreflow" is a reasonable letter column . . . but "An Obituary" of Captain Mar-Vell is too short to do Marvel's thrice-born superhero justice, and Colin's "Guide to the (price) Guides" and "Whatever Happened to the undergrounds" are even shorter. So, longer articles, review Bem (even big zines need love and/or attention), find some white paper, and one day, Colin, you'll be sending out GS as a bonus supplement to you zine!

JOE PUBLIC COMIX by David Hine is perhaps more in Mal Burns' part of the ballpark than mine; but what's a little overlap between friends? For 35p by post you get 20 A4 pages,

including a most well-conceived 12-pager by David, "Nine Scenes from a Nightmare", a lettercol with comments by Nick Neocleous, Theo Clarke, Andy Mulholland, Steve Edgell, Hunt Emerson, and others, and a 4-page strip called "Hitler On Ice" which convinced me that I'm a moron for not understanding it. The main strip is worth your money, though. . .

And I bought myself a copy of CEREBRO 5 in Dark They Were the other day; 24 A4 pages for 35p from G.F. Willmetts.

As previously reported, it's the clubzine of the Official (sanctioned by Marvel U.K.) X-Men Fan Club, masterminded by Geoff Lamprey from the above address; at the last count they'd reached 69 members, and they're all having a great, and constructive, time here. Art, layouts and contents improve steadily; if you want to be part of the effort, the annual membership fee (including bi-monthly Cerebros) is £3, but be warned--to get the most out of the Club, you have to contribute! This isn't a zine with a 95% apathy rate--Geoff expects everyone to join in, and he seems to be getting the response the zine needs.

Richie Warner reports that he's preparing an SF/sword & sorcery fanzine to be called REALMS; at present he's not after your hardearned cash, he's after contributions, including stories, art, and "a bit of everything else". . . so if you've been thinking of starting a career as a Big Name Fan, here's your chance to start. From Steven Green comes a report that ASTRON lives, but may not actually see print until the end of the year (and he's in need of illos); the fourth issue of Steve's 4 A4 page stencil fanzine, CLOSER TO THE EDGE, has recently appeared, though, with his "Reality Plus" column on fanzines (he mentions Bem's distinguished readership"--does he know something I don't?), plus letters. As the print run was only 50, Steve hasn't kept back copies to sell to you lot; if you send him two 8p stamps (or one 8p stamp, plus contribution, LoC or trade), he'll send you a copy of the October issue, though.

AFTER IMAGE 2 (25p by post for 24 A5 pages from Lew Stringer,

contains a photograph of editor Lew; he looks a bit like Cain without a beard, I can report, There's a vampire strip drawn by Adrian Salmon, one of Mo James' many short articles, this one on fanzines, a lettercol, a column called "Fandom in Action", and the second part of the "War Droid" (or now "War Bot") strip, plus a Dick Domar story. A good step forward on A1 issue 1--and the front cover, by Graham Bleathman, is particularly nice.

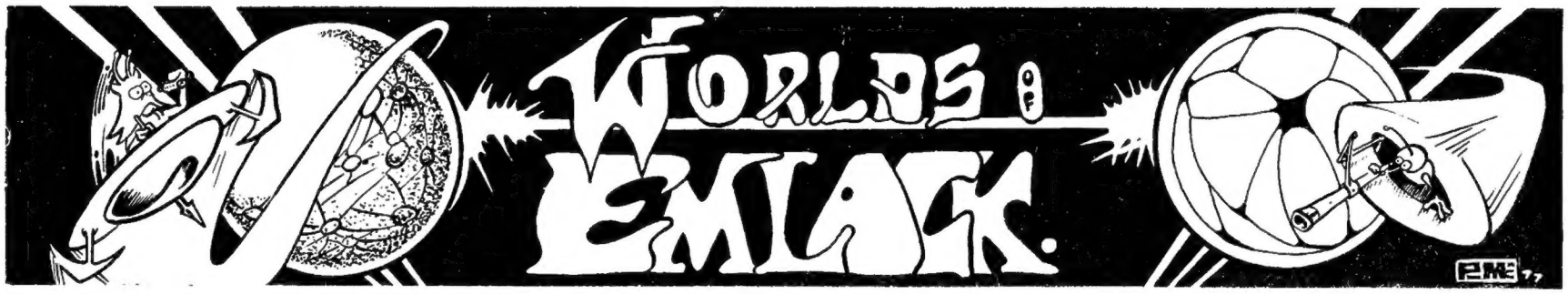
MEDIA 15 14 A4 pages for 22p from Nige Balloch,

is still the latest issue as I write, late in July; Nige seems to be having problems keeping to his monthly schedule, but this step up to the A4 size is a good idea. Well, at any rate it's more visible than a 16-page A6 format, as displayed by THE OWLS EFFORTwhich costs 15p from Dick Domar.

As Dick himself comments, "Great innit". And it includes 10 pages of comics for sale, with quite a wide variety of stock, including some rare stuff.

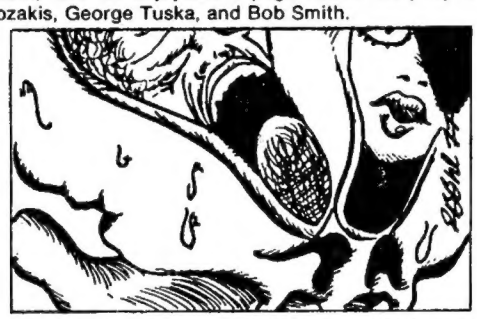
And NOUMENON 29/30 £3 by sea or £6.30 by air, to British agent Keith Walker,

for ten issues--though the zine, on this occasion with 40 7¼" by 10" pages, comes from Brian Thurogood, Gulf, New Zealand) has a fine wrap-around cover by Colin Wilson, and inside lots of SF news, reviews, letters, and other interesting stuff. If you like to keep in touch with the sf scene, this is a good zine to get; the alternative would be SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, a magazine I greatly enjoy and admire but don't really classify as a fanzine, but Noumenon is cheaper. . .



It's DC's turn to lead off--so let's start with their newest format, the digest comics, which have 100 half-size pages for 95 cents. This month's pair are both numbered in the "DC Special Series"; DCSS No. 18 is SGT ROCK'S PRIZE BATTLE TALES, featuring reprinted work by Kubert, Heath, Severin, Toth, Drucker and others, while issue 19 is SECRET ORIGINS OF SUPER-HEROES, with a new 10-page origin tale for Wonder Woman by Cary Burkett, José Delbo & Vince Colletta, plus reprints from such hard to get and expensive comics as FLASH 112 ("The Mystery of the Elongated Man"), BRAVE AND BOLD 43 (Hawkman in "The Masked Marauders of Earth"--his fifth adventure, including his origin retold, with pages 16 and 25 altered to transform part-pages into full ones), and ACTION 252 ("The Supergirl From Krypton", with page 8 similarly extended). Some good stuff, as you can see--and very handy to carry around!

Among the dollar comics, now with ads, dated like the "Blue Ribbon Digests" November are G.I. COMBAT, with a 6-pager drawn by George Evans, the usual three Haunted Tank tales by Kanigher & Glanzman, and two other war stories, and DETECTIVE COMICS 486, which starts with a 17-page Batman tale by Denny O'Neil, Don Newton & Dan Adkins, not at all bad. Dick Giordano turns in some nice art for the Human Target, too, while also on hand are Batgirl, Robin, and an enjoyable 7-page Alfred story by Bob Rozakis, George Tuska, and Bob Smith.



Among DC's October monthlies is WEIRD WAR TALES 80, which leads off with "An Old Man's Profession", drawn by Jess Jodloman, and written by Steve Gerber--it only runs to 7 pages, but it's worth your 12p (15p?), trust me! As of course JONAH HEX 29 is, "The Innocent" by Mike Fleisher & E.R. Cruz; I don't like to repeat myself, but if you only buy superhero comics at present, do yourself a favour and investigate books like this. After all, the major story in last year's Hex Spectacular was joint first in the Bem tally for the Eagle Awards. . .

FLASH 278 has the Scarlet Speedster in combat with Captain Boomerang--but not to get back stolen goods, or take CB into custody, he's more interested in finding out more about what happened at a certain fatal Masquerade Party. A very interesting title, these days; more so than BATMAN, which in issue 316 brings in Batsy's old chumpal-buddy, Robin, and Robsy's old sparring-partner Crazy Quilt, courtesy of Len Wein, Irv Novick & Frank McLaughlin.

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA 171 is the first half of the annual JLA/JSA collaboration, by Conway, Dillin & McLaughlin; anyone who wondered why a certain exmember of the JSA reappeared at the end of the JSA "novelette" in ADVENTURE 465 can now be told that it was so that he could be killed here, which is hardly "Fair Play". But whodunnit? It has to be one of the heroes, it seems. . .

And on that heavy note, on to Marvel; and there are some September books that deserve mention, first of all. MARVEL TEAM-UP 85 concludes the Black Widow 4parter, which also featured Spider-Man, Shang-Chi, Nick Fury, and lovely art by Steve Leialoha over the Sal Buscema breakdowns. And the story, by Chris Claremont, is the sort of thing you'd expect from an Eagle Awardwinner, too! AVENGERS 187 concludes the Wanda 'n' Pietro multi-parter well, too, while the Isaac/Titan Captain Marvel epic ends in MARVEL SPOTLIGHT 2, from Moench, Broderick & Patterson. Let's hope sales here are high enough to encourage Marvel to give Mar-Vell his own book back, because this is the sort of material I want to see more of! IRON MAN 126 is good, too; apart from flashback and cover, there's only one panel of Tony Stark in his crease-resistant uniform, but the story is still engrossing . . . with the hints about Stark's alcoholism getting clearer. And, after a loss of momentum recently, how pleasant to see that X-MEN 125 is back to top form on all fronts! How *can* Chris, John and Terry fit so much into seventeen pages, with Phoenix, the Danger Room, Magneto, "Jason Wyngarde" (*who* was it who played "Jason King" on TV . . . ?), Charles Xavier, Lorna and Alex, Hank McCoy . . . and a scream on a trans-Atlantic phone that suddenly goes silent, dead. . .

And October brings "Defeat", by Bill Mantlo, Michael Golden, and Al Milgrom, also known as MICRONAUTS 10; all I can say is that the climax approaches of what ought to be 1979's best continued story, and I look forward to getting issue 11 so that I can read through the whole epic in one go. I really must get a seat-belt for my chair first, though! CAPTAIN AMERICA 238 starts an interesting new tale, to move down to the more mundane monthlies, by Peter Gillis (who did that nice "floating superhero poker game" fill-in for MARVEL TWO IN ONE 51), Fred Kida & Don Perlin. The place, "Dovecote", and the damsel in distress, "Snowfall", are both intriguing; as a comics scripter, Mr Gillis is getting off to a pretty good start.

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL 4, co-starring Benjy and Black Bolt, is really just an ordinary two-parter behind one cover; a sequel to AVENGERS 158/159, with Gravitron changing into a sort of perambulating black hole. Issue 56 of the regular comic is rather better, though not the best part so far of the Project Pegasus story from Gruenwald, Macchio, Perez & Day, as Thundra and her female wrestler friends (remember Big Barda's cohorts?) invade the Project. But it looks as if Wundarr may be the key to the mysteries, so keep watching the stands.

SPIDER-WOMAN 19 continues to be eminently readable, thanks to Mark Gruenwald again and of course Carmine Infantino; Jack Russell returns to the book, and he's followed by The Enforcer, previously encountered in one of GHOST RIDER's less thrilling issues. And GHOST RIDER 38 happens to be the last Marvel comic to hand; Don Perlin turns in another solidly crafted art job, while Mike Fleisher is handling the scripting pretty well too. There are, or have been, other bi-monthly books I'd prefer to see moving up to monthly status, DAREDEVIL in particular, but on this showing the move is well deserved.

1984 number 7, at $1.75 for a solid 77 pages of story, eight Corben in colour and including work by Rudy Nebres, Alex Nino, and Alfredo Alcala, features the 15page debut of "Ghita of Alizarr", written and drawn by Frank Thorne. What do you think of it? Sonja it isn't, Code-approved it certainly isn't--well done it certainly is.

Welcome to a new column with an old name--albeit one with slight variations on the previous format. It is not my intention to add anything to the adequate coverage of mainstream comics which can be found elsewhere in this magazine--rather, I intend to concentrate on the alternatives. These may be books, magazines or adult comics, they may be 'fan' or 'pro', and, in reality, they may be as much European as British. To all intents and purposes, you are reading "Subterranean Showdown" as it appeared in CMNI until recently.

The most appropriate place to start is obviously with the latest wave of British stripzines. With the current lack of Ar:Zak publications, Near Myths and Graphixus, it is encouraging to see more new items than ever springing up.

SHOK THERAPY is published by Howard Priestly and Anthony Webber.

It is a fair first effort at producing a selective portfolio. Priestly's art is loose, and rather out of the standard comicbook style; Webber's looks more like decent fan art. Both are well on their way to better things, and the stories themselves are very well told. I presume 50p will cover the cost of getting a copy by mail.

The journal of strange phenomena, FORTEAN TIMES, is now up to issue 29, and boasts a new slick look. Most worthy of interest are the interior title headings, and a fullcolour cover by Hunt Emerson. The object retails at 75p, and is a weird read.

The first issue of SANCTUARY costs 45p.

It's a 28-page stripzine, with a few articles thrown in. The overall result is not too impressive, and faulty cover printing doesn't help the presentation; however, there are some nice touches and, with plenty of fan artists in evidence, it deserves all the support it can get.

SUPER ADVENTURE STORIES is up to issue two and three--neither have cover prices on them, but I see "FanThings" last time gave issue three's cost as 50p, from Mike Gibas. I have never seen the first issue of this, but can certainly recommend the second and third. The magazines have around half a dozen regular house artists, and their creations improve each time.

After a small-size and best forgotten issue 4½, APOCALYPSE FIVE has arrived from Dave Hornsby ; the asking price is 25p. This latest issue is shared by two strips; one is by Dave himself, whose artwork improves all the while, and the other is by Nick Neocleous. Nick's strip is rather old, and not too representative of what he is doing now--nevertheless, it is good to see it in print after all this time.

One of Neocleous' best rendered items to date appears in the new MOON COMIX. At 60p, this item boasts some great work by the likes of David Noon, Hunt Emerson, Bonk, Chris Welch, Bryan Talbot, Richard Page, and Jerzy Szostek. With a line-up like that, one can't add much more.

Most significant and very impressive is a new-wave item called VENGEFUL FATE. I can find no publishing credits on this, save the cover price, which is 30p. It is one of the best experimental visual sequences I have come across, so look for it.

The cartoon humour magazine DUCK SOUP has reached issue five. This is another nice magazine, with a totally anarchic format; it deserves to survive. However, there has been no sixth issue in the last month or two, so I fear the worst. . .

The first WORKING KLASS SUPER HERO costs 25p, and gets my award as the most promising of the new stripzines. Most interesting is an artist called Glenn Fabry, whose attempts to emulate various European rendering styles aren't bad at all. There are plenty of back-ups too, and a reasonably strong sense of editorial packaging is evident. The whole item holds together very well for a 'fanzine', and I hope more issues come soon.

CATASTROPHE COMICS and NEIL HISSUM COMICS are two items selling at 10p each. They are 16 pages of art by Damien Ledwich. They are small size. They are published by Ar:Zak as microcomix and on behalf of the artist. They are kinda kute! In fact--they are very cute. Get em!

MACH THREE COMIX has issues one and two out at 40p each .

They have an imprint which reads. . . "It's not murder--it's just a belated abortion!" Very polite, I'm sure, but oddly apt. The redeeming point is Bob Watkins' inking. Nice stuff! They seem to have problems trying to reproduce colour on a standard single sheet duplicator for the insert, which is a shame. I hope this mag takes off, but this second issue is a bit of a let-down after the first.

GRAPHIC ODYSSEY is my second favourite of the new lot. The cover price is 45p.

It's jampacked with lots of very fine stuff from both England and the USA. The pages are printed sideways, two to a page, which is something I dislike, but nevertheless gives plenty of reading value. Otherwise, I can find no fault with this item, and I certainly hope we see another issue before too long.

A limited edition GRAPHIXUS 5b is available. This is pure experimental fanzine stuff, and real curious. The less said the better. It costs 35p. Issue 5 is still available too--for 75p, with 68 glossy pages. £1.50 to Media & Graphic Creations. will bring you both, plus the MOON COMIX latest mentioned above. An extra 50p on that will also get you NEON COMIX. This is a portfolio item by Al Davidson, and is a very fine effort from both the artwork and story-telling perspectives. A shame about the quality of the colour cover printing, though!

Coming soon, we hope, are BLOOD SEX & TERROR 4, GRAPHIXUS 6/7, and NEAR MYTHS 4. These may well be the final issues for the last two. On the other hand--HIGH VISION is in the works! That seems to be it on the British zines for now. Let us know if you have anything else which should be covered here.

THUNDERMOLE

MOLE! YOU WILL HELP ME DESTROY DAIR.

DO YOU HEAR ME?

GLUG GLUG

YOUR SUPPLY OF LIQUOR WILL BE SEVERELY CURTAILED

O.K. O.K. I'LL HELP

GOOD, FIRST WE MUST FORMULATE A WORKABLE SCENARIO TO EXPEDITE MY PLAN

YOU MAY SAFELY LEAVE THE ENACTMENT TO ME.

MEANWHILE~ THE SELFSAME HERO IS IN DANGER OF SEVERE LACK OF FUTURE...

THEY'VE GIVEN UP..

... BUT HOW??

I GAVE THEM WHAT THEY WANTED

MOTHER WILL BE PLEASED.

DO YOU BOOGIE

NOW I CAN RESPRAY THE SAUCER.

HIC!

METAL POWER

WOULD YOU CARE TO PARTAKE OF LIQUID REFRESHMENT

OF COURSE.

BUT, WHEN DAIR REACHES INTO THE FRIDGE.....

WHAM!!!

RIGHT IN THE ICE CUBES

WELL! THAT PUTS DAIR ON ICE FOR A WHILE.

THE NEXT RECIPIENT OF YOUR RATHER EFFECTIVE DISPOSAL METHODS WILL NOT BE SO EASY, MOLE.

NEXT!

NEXT?

TERRY MOORE